

SERMONS

Upon the following

SUBJECTS.

The natural Difference between
Moral Good and Evil.

The Efficacy of Religious Faith.
The true Happiness of Man-
kind.

The Folly of Denying, or of
Wishing against, the Exist-
ence of the Deity.

The Sanctity and moral Go-
vernment of God.

The Nature, rational Grounds,
and necessary Qualifications
of Prayer.

The Nature, various Kinds,
Causes, and evil Consequen-
ces of Superstition; with Rea-
sons for guarding against it,
and the Methods of prevent-
ing, or remedying it.

The moral Value and Worth
of Faith considered, and par-
ticularly exemplified in the
Belief of our Saviour's Re-
surrection.

The Use, and Abuse of the
World.

The destructive Tendency of a
Life of licentious Pleasure.

Of Meekness and Quietness of
Spirit.

The Rule of *Doing as we would
be done to*, explained, and re-
commended.

The Love of our Country, ex-
plained, illustrated, and in-
forced.

By *JOHN ORR*, M. A.

Rector of *Maryborough*, in the Diocese of *Leighlin*. *Revised 1. 2nd ed.*

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SERMONS

By the Rev. J. J. Moore

SUBJECTS



TO HIS GRACE,
G E O R G E,
Lord Archbishop of *Armagh*,
Primate and Metropolitan of all
I R E L A N D;

The following
S E R M O N S,

As a Testimony of great Respect,

Are humbly inscribed,

By His GRACE's

Most dutiful,

And most obedient Servant,

J O H N O R R.

TO HIS GRACE

GEORGE

Lord Archbishop of Armagh,

Primate and Metropolitan of all

IRELAND;



SERIES

A Collection of

Are hereby intended

BY HIS GRACE

Most dutiful

And most obedient servant

JOHN O'NEILL

T H E
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M. I.

THE natural Difference between Moral Good and Evil.

I S A I A H V. 20.

Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darknefs for Light, and Light for Darknefs; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter. Pag. 1.

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Methods of preventing, or remedying it.

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and said, ye Men of Athens, I perceive
that in all Things ye are too superstitious.*

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S E R-

S E R M O N I.

The natural Difference between
Moral Good and Evil.

ISAIAH V. 20.

*Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and
Good Evil; that put Darknefs for Light,
and Light for Darknefs; that put Bitter
for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.*

AS the keeping the Notions of moral
Good and Evil clear and distinct
in our Minds, is the Foundation
both of just Sentiments in Speculation, and
good Practice in Life, the wise and good
Author of our Beings, has taken Care that
the doing so, should be a Matter of no
Difficulty to us; having given us an inward
Sense or Faculty, which can as readily per-
ceive and distinguish the Objects, which
are morally good or bad, as our outward

B

Senses

SERM. Senses discern their proper Objects, and

I. assure us of a Difference between any of them, and their Contraries. This is what the Prophet has intimated to us in the Text, by his representing the Men who confound the Ideas of *moral Good and Evil*, as chargeable with the same glaring Absurdity which those Persons fall into, (if any such are to be found) who *put Darknes for Light, and Light for Darknes*; and *who put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter*. As there is no Man, whose Eyes are not quite clouded or extinguished, who does not perceive the Light, and know it to be essentially different from its Opposite, Darknes; as there is none, whose Palate is not altogether obstructed and vitiated, who has not the Sensations of Sweet and Bitter, and who cannot but distinguish what is grateful and pleasing, from what is disagreeable and nauseous to his Taste; so there are none, whose Power of moral Discernment is not utterly perverted and corrupted, which it is hardly possible for it ever to be, who do not see a *Fair, and a Deformed*; in the *Affections and Actions of Mankind*; a *Right, and a Wrong in Life*; and who do not approve and love the one, and condemn and hate the other.

It

It is, therefore, very surprizing that any SERM.
should ever have thought of denying a Dis- I.
tinction, which is so manifestly founded in
Nature, and the Truth of which is so uni-
versally attested by the Consciences of Man-
kind, which yet it is certain several, both
in ancient and late Times, have, with great
Boldness and Confidence, and with some
Art and Subtilty, attempted to do. The
like Conduct, with respect to the Objects of
the external Senses; the denying the Dif-
ference between Light and Darknes; the
confounding all the various Kinds, and
Degrees of Colours, Sounds, Tastes, and
Smells, would be an Argument of the most
extravagant Madnes; and the acting upon
such a Scheme must unavoidably plunge a
Man in Destruction. The denying a Dis-
tinction among moral Objects, is really
as flagrant Absurdity, and as extravagant
Folly, as the denying a Distinction among
material and sensible Things themselves;
the one is as contradictory to the inward
Convictions and Feelings of Men, as the
other is to the Notices and Informations
conveyed to them by their outward Organs;
and the acting without a Regard to the
Difference of moral Good and Evil, Virtue
and Vice, must as certainly bring upon the

SERM. Soul Ruin and Death, as the indiscriminate

I. Use of all sensible Things would draw Destruction upon the Body. Very justly, therefore, does the Prophet denounce Woe to the Men, who act a Part so perverse and unnatural! *Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.* In discoursing farther from which Words, I shall, *First*, Shew that there is a natural fixed Difference between moral Good and Evil, sufficiently clear and manifest to the moral Judgment and Conscience of every Man. *Secondly*, Inquire from whence an Attempt to confound the Notions of moral Good and Evil, and to obliterate the Impressions of Virtue and Vice in the Mind, can proceed. *Thirdly*, Consider the terrible Effects which this Attempt must have on the Minds and Happiness of Men. *Lastly*, Conclude with some useful Instructions and Inferences from the whole.

I. I shall shew that there is a natural fixed Difference between moral Good and Evil, sufficiently clear and evident to the moral Judgment and Conscience of every Man. But before I proceed to establish

this Difference, it will be proper briefly to consider what is to be understood by the Words, *moral Good and Evil*. Good and Evil are chiefly of two Kinds, natural and moral. All those Things are naturally good, which afford us agreeable Perceptions, which gratify any of the Senses or Powers of receiving Pleasure in us, and contribute, either immediately, or remotely, to our Happiness. And on the other hand, all those Things are naturally evil, which excite in us painful Sensations or Ideas, and are either directly, or indirectly, Sources of Misery to us. Concerning the Difference between Good and Evil of this Class, there is no Dispute. Moral Good and Evil are to be found only in the Dispositions and Actions of rational Agents, and not in all of these; for some of them partake of neither, but are, in a moral Computation, altogether indifferent in their Nature. The Affections and Actions of Mankind, to which Good or Evil of the moral Kind can be ascribed, are principally those of Them which terminate upon other intelligent Beings, and are expressive either of Respect and Love, or of Contumacy and Ill-will to Them; or are actually productive of Happiness

SERM. nefs or Misery to Them *. The intelligent

I. Beings, to whom we are related, and towards whom we are to exercise our Affections, are chiefly God, the eternal Source of Reason and all Perfection, the infinitely wise, holy, good, and powerful Maker and Governor of all Things; and Mankind, made after the Image of God, with whom we are closely and inseparably connected, and to whom we have constant Opportunities of being useful. Now whenever we reflect either upon our own Tempers and Dispositions, or those of Others, and the Actions which flow from them, with reference either to God or Man, we always find something amiable and agreeable, and that gains our Esteem and Love; or something deformed and disagreeable, and which raises our Aversion. The Dispositions of Reverence, Love, Gratitude, and Submission towards the supreme Being, have

* Besides Affections of this Sort, it is certain, that a Desire of our own Improvement in Virtue, or of our Attainment to the true Dignity and Perfection of our Nature, appears to us to have a great deal of moral Worth and Beauty; and the Neglect of it, of Evil and Deformity. But as the Loveliness, or Deformity of these Things, does not generally strike Men so strongly and immediately, as the Goodness of Piety and Charity, and the Evil of their Contraries, I instance here chiefly in the Dispositions of Piety and Humanity, and their Opposites; and it is sufficient to the Purpose of this Discourse, to prove a Difference between them.

have ever a lovely Appearance, and are SERM.
necessarily approved by us. On the con- I.

trary, a Temper of Profaneness, a Mind
utterly inattentive to, and quite unaffected
by the clear Instances of Wisdom, Power,
Goodness, and Righteousness, appearing in
the Constitution and Government of the
Universe, and acting in Contradiction to
the apparent Ends of the divine Admini-
stration, is a horrid and odious Object, and
necessarily gives Offence and Dislike to us.
The Exercise of Justice, Truth, Friendship,
and Kindness to our Neighbours, a fixed
Disposition and Endeavour to promote, by
all Means in our Power, the universal Hap-
piness of Mankind, are Things very beau-
tiful and engaging, which we cannot but
admire and love. And on the other Side,
Injustice, Falsehood, Treachery, and Cru-
elty in our Dealings with Men; a Neglect of
the Interest of Society, and a sacrificing of
the publick Welfare to our private Views,
are Things extremely base and shocking,
and which must unavoidably be abhorred
by us. The Eye of the Mind, our Faculty
of moral Discernment, as easily perceives a
Fairness and Excellence in some of these
Qualities and Actions, and a Foulness and
Baseness in their Opposites, as the bodily

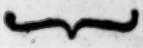
SERM. Eye sees Beauty and Order in regular
 I. Forms, and well-proportioned Figures, and
 Uncouthness and Confusion in rude Heaps,
 and monstrous Shapes.

Now that this is not a chimerical, or enthusiastick Representation; but that Piety, Justice, and Charity, are really Things good and lovely in themselves, and that the opposite Dispositions have an intrinsic Evil and Deformity; that our Consciences see the essentially different Qualities of these contrary Principles, and approve, or disapprove of them, upon a simple View of their Nature, antecedently to Institution, the Appointment of Laws, and all Considerations of Advantage or Disadvantage accruing to ourselves from the Exercise of them, is the Point which I shall attempt to prove.

And the Truth of it may, certainly, be easily made out to every ingenuous Man, since he may have very clear and sufficient Evidence of it, by reflecting upon the Perceptions and Feelings of his own Mind. Let any one but consider, how he is affected towards a Man habitually actuated and governed by the Love of God and of Mankind; and another who has neither any Reverence towards God, nor Goodwill to Men; who derides and contemns every thing accounted Divine and Sacred,
 who

who tramples upon all the Obligations of SERM.
Justice and Humanity, and pursues nothing I.
but the unbounded Gratification of his pri-
vate Appetites and Desires; let any one,
I say, reflect upon the Sentiments and Af-
fections which he feels towards the Men
of these opposite Characters; upon the
Esteem, Veneration, and Love, which he
has towards the one, and the Contempt,
Indignation, and Hatred which arise in him
towards the other; and he must soon be
convinced of a great Difference between
the moral Dispositions of the Men, the
Contemplation of which gives Rise to such
different Perceptions and Modifications of
Mind in him. As the Perceptions of the
Eye are a sufficient Proof of a Distinction
between Light and Darkneſs, and thoſe of
the Ear between Harmony and Diſcord,
and of the Taſte between Sweet and Bitter;
as the Man would be reckoned quite ab-
ſurd, or mad, who from the different Sen-
ſations conveyed to him by theſe outward
Senſes, would not acknowledge a Difference
in the Objects which excited them: So the
inward Apprehenſions of the Mind, the
Dictates of our moral Senſe or Judgment,
and the different Tempers which we feel
in Ourſelves upon the View of the op-
poſite Tempers and Characters of moral
Agents,

SERM. Agents, must be an incontestable Proof to

I.  all attentive and impartial Persons, of a natural Difference among moral Objects. Indeed if it could be supposed, that we were deceived in this Point, where we have almost an immediate Consciousness, and intuitive View of the Truth; if our simple Perceptions and Approbations are not to be relied on, as a sufficient Evidence of the Reality and Distinction of their respective Objects, there is an End of all Knowledge, and we can be certain of nothing at all.

But however the Truth of the Distinction between moral Good and Evil, may be securely rested with candid and impartial Men upon this Evidence; yet, as it is a Matter of the greatest Consequence, we may, for the farther Illustration of it, observe, that not only the inward Sense and Feeling of Men may assure them of the Reality of this Distinction, but that a great Part of their external Conduct plainly supposes and proves It. Even They who are willing to deny or dissemble their inward Conviction, cannot help discovering by many Instances of their Behaviour, with respect both to Others and Themselves, that they see a great Difference between certain moral Qualities, and their Contraries. For, who

who even of the most profligate of Man-
kind, who, in their Talk upon the Subject,
are always ridiculing the Notions of Virtue
and Vice, do not yet, upon some Occasions,
appear to be struck with the Beauty of an
eminently good and generous character,
and shocked with the Deformity of a de-
testably vile and base one? Who of them,
out of the Heat of Dispute, and not at-
tending to Speculations, are not led by the
mere Force of Nature, to admire and praise
a Patriot, or a Person of distinguished In-
tegrity and Benevolence; and to despise
and hate a Traitor, or the Man who acts
the Villain? Who of them, that have any
Affairs to commit to the Conduct of other
Men, do not chuse for their Trustees and
Agents, Persons of approved Truth and
Honesty, rather than those who are known
to have no Principles of Justice in them?
What truly pious and righteous Man does
not express the highest Satisfaction in his
Course of Life, and appear to be habitually
full of Joy and Peace? And who of the
most vicious do not sometimes relent, are
not seen to be stung with Remorse, and to
be full of Uneasiness and Horror? Who of
those that are for confounding all moral
Ideas, do not assume to themselves the Me-
rit

SERM.

I.

SERM. rit of a publick-spirited, beneficent Con-

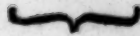
I.

duct, and lay it as the Foundation of their claiming the Esteem and Honours of Society, while they never have the Confidence to mention their Debaucheries and Vices, (however they may sometimes boast of them in private) as the Ground of public Honour; which, yet, if there was no Difference in Nature between one Sort of moral Dispositions and another, they might with equal Justice do? In vain therefore do any pretend to deny the Distinction between moral Good and Evil, while their Behaviour, in so many Instances, confirms and ascertains it; and shews indeed, that they themselves, after all their Attempts to suppress or conceal their inward Sentiments, plainly discern it. Such is the Power of Conscience in this Case, as to extort from Men a more substantial Acknowledgment, than a mere Confession in Words, of the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, in an Exertion of those different Affections, which the Consciousness of morally good or bad Qualities in Themselves, or the View of them in Others, naturally excites; so that they cannot dispute against the Existence and Distinction of these Objects, without confuting their Arguments
by

by their Practice, and laying themselves open to the Charge both of Inconsistency and Dishonesty. SERM. I.

Besides, to give us still a stronger Conviction of the natural Difference between moral Good and Evil, discernible to the Consciences of Men, let us consider, that the Justification of our Affections and Actions necessarily depends upon this. If any one should be asked why he is better pleased with himself, or any other Man, for being affected in such a Manner, rather than another; for being, for Instance, compassionate, friendly, and generous, rather than cruel, oppressive, and tyrannical; for conceiving Indignation and Resentment against flagrant Impiety and Inhumanity, rather than for being utterly insensible with respect to these Things? He could give no Answer that would be accepted, but that the one Sort of Affections and Dispositions are amiable, worthy, and becoming a Man; and the other Sort, the reverse. If his Conduct should be arraigned or called in question, in any particular Cases, he would have no way of defending himself, but by shewing, that the Principles and Motives which he went upon, were noble and generous, and his Measures calculated for the public Good;

SERM. Good; or, at least, that his Views were in-

I. nocent, being neither injurious, nor meanly selfish, and his Actions consistent with the Rights of his Neighbours. Except he could do this, it is certain that he would never be acquitted, or excused by Mankind. So that in accounting for the Constitution of our Nature, and in vindicating ourselves from those Aspersions and Accusations which are so common in the World, we must necessarily have Recourse to our natural Notions of Good and Evil, of Excellence and Baseness in human Affections and Actions, without which nothing can be suggested upon these Points, that would be satisfying either to Ourselves or Others. The Power of the Pleader and Orator, plainly arises from these moral Perceptions.

To these Considerations, I shall only add, in the last Place, that the Truth of the Distinction between moral Good and Evil, and the Reality of our Perceptions of Virtue and Vice, appear from those ingenious imitative Arts, which give so much Pleasure and Entertainment to the Men of Taste, and polite Education. Indeed the whole Force and Effect of those Arts is owing to this Distinction, and these Perceptions. For what is there in them which has such a wonder-

wonderful Influence upon Men, which SERM.
raises in them such Admiration, Delight, I.
and Transport, which gives them such Variety of lively Sentiments and strong Passions, but the Truth and Propriety of Characters and Manners, just and apt Representations of moral Beauties or Deformities, of Excellence and Worth, or of Baseness and Vileness in the Affections and Behaviour of Men? Without Representations of this kind, the Labours of the Poet, the Painter, and the Statuary, would be in a great measure lost, and none of the Productions of their Wit or Art, could make any deep and lasting Impressions; whereas moral Portraits and Descriptions must sensibly strike the Mind, awaken our Attention, and interest our Affections; and might serve instead of all other Arguments, to convince us, both of the Truth and Difference of those intellectual Images or Objects, which they bring under our View and Contemplation.

If against all This it should be objected, as it has sometimes been, that our Notions of moral Good and Evil spring not from any Principle in Nature, but from Institution, Education, Custom, Tradition, Enthusiasm, and the like; it may be answered,

SERMON. swered, that the Contrary appears to be the

I. Fact, from the Universality and Uniformity of Men's Sentiments upon all the principal Branches of Morality; and from the Tempers of those who are least influenced by Instruction, and adventitious Opinions. According to all Appearances in Children, and in those Tribes and Nations of Men who are called rude and barbarous, human Nature leads directly to the Approbation and Love of what we call moral Goodness, and the Condemnation and Dislike of moral Evil; Persons of the clearest Discernment, and most free from those Prejudices and Passions, which would darken or corrupt their Minds, usually retain the deepest Impressions of moral Distinctions; and indeed there are hardly any who ever pretend an Insensibility with respect to these Distinctions, till they have visibly corrupted their Hearts, and are under the Dominion of Affections, which deprave their Judgment, and make them glad to have something to say in Excuse for their Wickedness.

If, again, it should be said, that our Ideas of moral Good and Evil depend only on positive Laws, and the arbitrary Will of a Superior; the Answer is obvious, that
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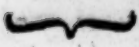
SERM. terest; because we find we have as strong

I. a Sense of the Worth or Baseness of those Actions, which affect only the Happiness of others, as we have of the Worth or Baseness of those which affect our own: Nay, that we must frequently approve and admire Actions, which tend to our particular Loss; and disapprove and detest others, which are highly beneficial to us. Our Conscience, or moral Judgment of Good and Evil, is not to be bribed into an Esteem of the Conduct of Men, by any Considerations of private Gain. It may indeed be deceived by a false Shew of Goodness; but sincere Piety, Justice, and Humanity, and a Desire of improving ourselves still more in these excellent Qualities, are the only Things which it can regard, as morally worthy or virtuous; as the Contrary are uniformly condemned by it, as evil or vicious.

II. I proceed now to inquire, from whence an Attempt to confound the Notions of moral Good and Evil, and to obliterate the Impressions of Virtue and Vice in the Mind, can proceed? And here it must be observed, that this Inquiry relates, not to the Principles and Motives of the Persons

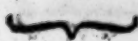
Persons, who may advance Speculations SERM.
and Hypotheses, which in their Conse- I.
quences, destroy the natural Difference be-
tween moral Good and Evil, but who do
not see, nor would stand by any such Con-
sequences of their Doctrine; but to the
Springs of those Men's Conduct, who pro-
fessedly deny the Distinction, who avow-
edly dispute and argue against it, and re-
joice in the Thoughts of having made out
the Conclusion. And as to the Attempts
of such, it seems very plain that they can
be resolved into nothing, but *gross Prepos-
session, and obstinate Prejudice*. And it is not
difficult to see how Men may come to be
so much prejudiced in this Matter: For
our Sense of moral Good and Evil, our na-
tural Judgment of Right and Wrong, being
the Origin of all moral Obligations; Men
who will not be kept within the Bounds of
their Duty, must be fond above all Things,
to bear down this Faculty, or to persuade
themselves that its Dictates are mere Chi-
meras. This, they will see, is the only
Foundation upon which they can hope for
any settled Rest and Peace, while they con-
tinue in their evil Courses. For if it were
possible to them, (which, certainly, may
well be doubted) to throw off entirely the

SERM. Principles of Religion, and to become the

I.  greatest Sceptics, or even confirmed Infidels as to the Existence of a Deity, all that they would gain by bringing themselves into this unnatural and shocking State of Mind, would only be to release themselves from the strongest additional Ties and Motives to the Exercise of moral Virtue: While their natural Conscience, or the moral Judgment of their Minds, continued to exert itself with any Vigour, and pointed out to them the Things that are good or evil, the primary Obligations of Morality would still remain, and they would feel themselves to be under the Power of them; the Consciousness of which would necessarily gall and fret them, and give them frequent Touches of Remorse and Uneasiness. It is therefore the Interest of Men, resolved upon a profligate and libertine Life, to stifle and suppress the Voice of Conscience, and to treat all its Decisions as groundless Fancies and Illusions. And here, whatever Exceptions are, perhaps, to be made as to some few, who from mere Vanity, and an Affectation of *thinking boldly*, dispute against the Truth and Distinction of our Ideas of Virtue and Vice, we certainly have the most universal Source of the Opposition which

which is made to these Notions: The SERM.
 Persons who *hate to be reformed*, must na- I.
 turally hate the Principles, which, if ad-
 mitted to be true, would restrain and check
 them in their vicious Pursuits, and be the
 constant Reproach and Condemnation of
 their Conduct. They, therefore, set them-
 selves to ridicule the Notions of moral Good
 and Evil, and have recourse to every Sub-
 tility which they can invent, to shew that
 they have no Foundation in Nature; and
 use every Art in their Power, to suppress
 or extirpate the Sense or Faculty which
 suggests them. And though they must many
 times unavoidably feel, that their Efforts
 of this kind are vain, (moral Perceptions
 being so essential to their Constitution, and
 so deeply planted in it, that after all that
 can be done to eradicate them, they are
 still ready to shoot out and grow again)
 yet as they fancy themselves to be more
 free and easy, in proportion to the Progress
 which they make in stifling and laying
 waste their Consciences, they renew and
 continue their Attempts to oppress and de-
 stroy them. Now that strong Prejudice,
 arising from the Prevalence of some un-
 manly, or evil Passion, and for the most
 part from a deep Corruption of Heart, is

SERM. the true Cause of Men's Enmity to the

I.  Notions of moral Good and Evil, cannot be doubted, if we consider, that these Notions are really congenial with the human Mind, springing up as certainly and uniformly in it as its Faculties open and unfold, as any Sensations and Affections arise in it at the proper Time of their Appearance; and that all those Men, who can least be suspected of having a Bias on their Minds, have ever the most sensible Conviction of the Truth of these Ideas; and that there are but very few who deny the Certainty of them, who are not openly as averse to the Duties of Morality in Practice, as they are to these fundamental Principles of it in Speculation. In this Case, therefore, of expunging the Ideas, and exploding the Distinction of Virtue and Vice, above all others, the Reason which our Saviour gives for the Infidelity of Men, holds good; that *they love Darkneſs rather than Light, be-
cause their Deeds are evil; that they hate
the Light, neither come to the Light, leſt
their Deeds ſhould be reproved.*

John iii.
19, 20.

III. I ſhall now briefly repreſent the terrible Effects which this Attempt to confound or extinguiſh the Notions of moral
Good

Good and Evil, must have on the Minds SERM.
and Happiness of Men. As this Attempt I.

always arises from some great Disorder in the Mind, so it extremely heightens that Disorder; and indeed throws the Mind into the most unnatural, perverted, and wretched State that can be. The Soundness, Health, and Vigour, the Harmony, Perfection, and Happiness of the human Soul, consist in a just Arrangement of its several Powers and Affections, in a due Subordination and Subjection of its inferior Principles and Movements to the guiding and governing Power, or Faculty in it, *a well informed Conscience, or a rightly cultivated moral Sense.* When our moral Judgment, or the Principle of Conscience steadily presides and governs in the Mind; when its Dictates are the Rule or Law, according to which, all Our Appetites, Passions, and Affections operate; our inward Man is healthy and strong; our Souls exert themselves according to the Intention and Order of Nature, and we make a decent and amiable Appearance among rational Beings, in proportion to our Capacity and Rank in the Creation, and at the same time enjoy the most noble and manly Pleasures, and indeed the most valuable Hap-

SERM. pines which our Nature will admit of. But

I. the smallest Breach made in this Constitution of the Soul, by the Rebellion of the lower Principles in any Instance, against the Direction of the supreme Faculty, always introduces some Irregularity and Confusion into it, and, in some Degree, spoils its Beauty and Perfection, and interrupts its Ease and Tranquillity: Greater Violations of this Constitution, by the habitual Indulgence of evil Passions, in Opposition to the plain Decisions, and repeated Remonstrances and Admonitions of Conscience, bring upon the Mind proportionably greater Disorders and Deformities, and exceedingly encrease its Uneasiness and Pain: And the greatest Subversion of this Constitution, by endeavouring to extinguish the very Light of Conscience itself, to extirpate our Sense, or to confound, or corrupt our Notions of moral Good and Evil, must necessarily put the Mind into a State of the highest Disorder, Depravation, and Misery that can be imagined. For when thus the Guide of Life is blinded or seduced, and all Rule and Government in the Soul is destroyed, a Man becomes a Prey to every wild Desire and Passion which arises in him, the Consequences of which must be the utter Desolation

solation and Ruin of the Mind; the strip-
ping it of every fair and lovely Affection,
and filling it with Qualities of a deformed
and horrid Aspect; the depriving it of all
rational Enjoyments, and instead of these,
the raising in it Tumults, Dissonancies, and
Distractions; Racks and Tortures, from
the Fermentation of unnatural Passions, and
the Cravings of Appetites never to be sa-
tisfied; and, in some calm Intervals, Re-
morse and Anguish, Alarms and Terrors
of Conscience, gloomy Apprehensions, and
dismal Forebodings *of the Wrath to come*;
the rendering it feeble and impotent to all
that is Manly or Good; and the reducing
it to a State of Slavery, Sickness, Death.
All those dreadful Effects, an Attempt to
fifle, confound, or corrupt the Dictates of
Conscience, concerning the Objects that
are morally Good or Evil, must as cer-
tainly produce in the Soul, so far as it
succeeds; as the Eating of Poison, or the
Wounding of any vital Part, must bring
Pains, Convulsions, Agonies, Weakness,
Languishing, and Dissolution on the Body.
So that what our Saviour said of the Effect
of Rejecting his Doctrine, may most justly
be applied to the Consequences of denying
or rejecting the Doctrine concerning the
Certainty

SERM.

I.

SERM. Certainty and Difference of moral Good and

I. Evil; that *on whomsoever they shall fall,*
they will grind him to Powder.

Matt. xxi.

44.

It remains, that I conclude with some useful Instructions and Inferences from the Whole.

I. We may see the great Goodness of God, in endowing us with a natural Discernment and Approbation of our Duty. Moral Good is the Substance of all human Duty; there is nothing either in Morality or Religion, which is not a Part of it, or ultimately referred to it, and intended for securing and establishing more effectually the Practice of it. Now as the Author of our Beings has interwoven the Knowledge and Love of this, in our very Frame and Make; as he has made it impossible to us to exercise our Faculties according to the Order of Nature, without being struck with a Sense and Admiration of moral Goodness, he has evidently been very indulgent and kind to us, and greatly consulted our Ease and Pleasure in the Service and Obedience which he demands from us. There is no need of any laborious Researches, to

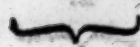
Micah vi.
8.

Deut. xxx.
14.

inform ourselves of *what is good, and what the Lord requires from us; the Word of Instruction is near us, even in our Hearts,*
 and

and in our Consciences; so that by con-SERM.
sulting our own Minds, by attending to I.
the Dictates of our inward Guide and Mo-
nitor, we may easily perceive, at least, all
the great Lines of our Duty: Nor will
there be any Difficulty, if we do not vo-
luntarily corrupt ourselves, in the Perform-
ance of our Duty. Virtue is far from be-
ing, as it has too often been represented, a
Struggle with Nature, or a Constraint on
its Desires and Affections: This is only the
Reproach and Calumny which has been
weakly, or wickedly, thrown upon it, by
Persons judging of the natural Condition of
Mankind, from what they observe to be the
State of Sinners, endeavouring to recover
themselves from the Power of habitual De-
baucheries and Immoralities. On the con-
trary, Light is not more pleasant to the
Eyes, than Virtue is agreeable to the un-
corrupted human Mind; there is an Ami-
ableness and Resplendency in it, which,
while we are unprejudiced, never fails to
command the highest Esteem and Venera-
tion of our Consciences, and most power-
fully to attract and engage our Affection.
As God, therefore, has laid so good a Foun-
dation in the Constitution of our Beings,
for our coming both to the Knowledge and
Practice

SERM. Practice of the great Duties which he has

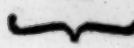
I.  required from us, it is plain that he is far from being a hard Master, or a tyrannical Governor; but that he has indeed proved himself our gracious Father in the Laws which he has prescribed to us, as well as in all his other Dispensations towards us; having exacted nothing from us, but what he has given us very sufficient Power to do, nothing almost indeed, but what we must have done, if we were led by our natural Principles and Dispositions, though it had never been commanded by his supreme Authority.

2. From what hath been said, we may see the Foundation of the Rewardableness of Virtue, and of those joyful Hopes which naturally spring from it. Virtue is a Thing which hath an inherent Excellence and Worth, which every Mind that can form an Idea of it, must greatly respect, honour, and love. There is no Man, who is conscious of partaking of it in a high Degree, who does not delight in his own Nature, and who has not the most agreeable Relish of the Dignity which it confers on him; and there is none, who observes it eminently possessed by others, who does not reverence them upon the account of it, and who

who is not most truly disposed to contribute SERM.
to their Happiness, if he gives way to his I.
natural Principles and Passions. And as
the Deity, who has planted this noble and
generous Sense of the Beauty and Merit
of Virtue in the human Mind, must have
an inconceivably higher Perception of the
Loveliness and Worth of it himself, we
may conclude that it is an Object which
will always meet with his Approbation,
that he will ever patronize the Cause of it,
and that its Interests will flourish under his
Administration to all Eternity.

3. We may here likewise see the Inex-
cusableness and ill Desert of all gross, or
wilful Immorality. It is impossible to a
Man to allow himself in any Instances of
flagrant Vice, or in any Degree of wilful
Sin, without a plain Violation of the Law
of his Nature, without offending and shock-
ing his Mind, and exposing himself to the
Disapprobation, Reproofs, and Stings of
his own Conscience; and without being
sensible at the same Time of doing what
must raise Displeasure and Indignation a-
gainst him in every intelligent and moral
Being, who is acquainted with the Naugh-
tiness and Depravity of his Heart. We
may indeed be chargeable with several
Omissions

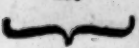
SERM. Omissions of Duty, and positive Transgres-

I.  sions of the Law of our Minds, which proceeding only from Ignorance, Inadvertence, or Surprize, will give us no great Uneasiness or Disturbance within: But as for all gross Enormities, which contradict and bear down the clearest Suggestions of Conscience, and all known Sins, it is plainly as impossible to us to commit these, without accusing, condemning, and disliking Ourselves, upon the Account of them, as it is to tear our Flesh without feeling Pain, or to swallow a bitter Potion and not to have an ungrateful Relish. An inward Disturbance, Restlessness, and Confusion, Remorse and Displacency with ourselves, and Fear of superior Powers, are the unavoidable Consequences of conscious Wickedness, at least upon some Occasions, from the very Nature and Frame of our Souls. In vain, therefore, do Sinners attempt to shift off Guilt, and to free themselves from Blame, by any Sophistry, Artifice, or Colouring whatsoever. And in vain do they flatter themselves with the Hope of escaping the Judgment of God, if a sincere Repentance does not prevent its overtaking them. After all that they can alledge in their own Justification, or Defence, they
need

need only look within themselves, in a se-
rious Hour, to be assured, that there is
something very base, unworthy, and hate-
ful in them; that they carry an Accuser
and Avenger in Their Breasts, which chal-
lenges and upbraids them for their evil
Deeds; which both punishes them in this
World, and gives them terrifying Presages
of a severer Punishment which is to fall
upon them in a World to come. Indeed
the Judgment which they pass upon them-
selves, naturally prepares the Way for their
falling under the Condemnation of God:
Out of their own Consciences will the Go-
vernour of the World convict, and judge
them; nor will they be able to offer any
Plea to stop his Proceedings, or have the
least Reason to complain of not receiving
Forgiveness from him, while they are in
a State, in which they cannot obtain it
from Themselves.

4. Let us take our natural Sense of mo-
ral Good and Evil, as our Guide in all our
Inquiries about Religion. As this is the
original Light which the Author of Nature
has kindled up in our Minds, for pointing
out to us the Way of Virtue and Happiness;
as all the Notices which he otherwise con-
veys to us, are only supplemental to, and
in

SERM. in Aid of this ; we should in all our Specu-

I.  lations and Reasonings on religious and moral Subjects, have Recourse to this our first and principal Source of Instruction and Information, and make the Sentiments which we derive from hence, a Rule or Standard for determining the Truth or Falseness of all Doctrines and Opinions in Points of Religion and Morality. This is one of the best Methods that we can take for guarding against Deception, and arriving at the Knowledge of the Truth, in Matters of the greatest Consequence. Whatever Notions and Opinions agree with our natural Sentiments of moral Piety and Virtue, or tend to support, strengthen, and improve these Sentiments, have the Characters of Truth and Goodness upon them, and are evidently worthy of proceeding from the Fountain of Light and Love. Whatever Doctrines, on the contrary, obscure, or extinguish our natural Light ; whatever Notions corrupt or deface, confound or perplex the Dictates of our Consciences concerning Virtue and Vice, must certainly be false, and cannot have God for their Author, who can never be supposed to make any After-discoveries to us, which would be inconsistent with the Truths or Notices which he wrote



wrote in our Hearts, at the time of our Creation. Proceeding by this Rule, we shall soon acquiesce in all the genuine Doctrines, both of natural Religion, and of Christianity, which presuppose and recognize the essential Difference between moral Good and Evil, which give us the strongest Impressions of the Dignity and Importance of Virtue, and of the Baseness and evil Consequences of Vice, and furnish us with the most powerful Motives to abound in the One, and to keep at the utmost Distance from the Other; while, at the same Time, we shall reject all Opinions, which either directly attack the Cause of Virtue, or in their Consequences undermine it; which would persuade us that there is nothing really generous, or worthy of Esteem in human Nature, but that our most plausible Actions flow only from Custom, Fancy, Policy, Fear, or some meanly selfish Principle; which lay the Stress of Religion, and the Salvation of Men, not on the Practice of the moral Duties of Piety, Righteousness, and Charity, but on something different from it, or opposite to it; on outward Forms and Rites, or inward Heats and Raptures; on mere Belief and speculative Notions, and a presumptuous Reliance on

D

the

SERM. the Mercies of God, and Merits of Christ ;
 I. on a Zeal against Error, and hating, reviling, damning, persecuting, and extirpating all who happen to be reputed Hereticks and Enemies to the Cause of God, though very probably many of them are among the worthiest and best upon Earth. Of the utter Absurdity of all Opinions of this Sort, we may have a Demonstration in the natural Convictions and Feelings of our Minds, and if we are but true to Ourselves, and make a proper and becoming Use of the Powers and Faculties which the Author of our Beings has given us, it is impossible that we should ever be induced, upon any Pretences, either of Reason, or Authority, to assent to them.

5. Let our Sense of moral Good and Evil, likewise guide and govern our Practice and Conversation in the World. The End for which it was implanted in us, was not only to instruct us in our Duty, but to oblige and prompt us to do it; and if we will but keep it pure and lively, and submit to its Direction and Influence, we shall find it a very sure and effectual Principle of all Piety and Goodness in us. The Principle of natural Conscience alone, in all ordinary Cases, and common Occurrences of Life,

Life, can both give us a clear and immediate Notice of our Duty, and enable us with Ease and Pleasure to perform it; and in complicated Cases, where Deliberation and Reasoning may be wanted to discern the honest, the worthy, and generous Part, and to fix on the proper Methods of conducting ourselves; and where Strength of Mind may be necessary to adhere to our Resolutions; the steady Influence of this Principle, is the best Security both for our judging truly, and acting with Vigour in Pursuance of the Determinations which we come to. Indeed, if we duly cultivate this Principle; if we improve and strengthen our natural Sense of moral Good and Evil, by complying with its Dictates, and calling to its Assistance, Reason, and the Principles of Religion, it will be a constant and ready Defence to us against all Temptations to Vice, will inspire us with the noblest Sentiments and Affections, fill us with such an Ardour in the Practice of Virtue as will surmount all Opposition, and raise us to such Perfection in it, as will do Honour to our Nature, and make our Life a Pleasure to ourselves, and a Blessing to all around us.

SERM.

6. Lastly, Let us carefully guard against

I.

every thing, that would confound, darken, or corrupt our Notions of moral Good and Evil; particularly against the Prevalence of evil Passions in our Hearts, which lie at the Bottom of all Cavils against the natural Distinction of Virtue and Vice; these, on Account of their Tendency to pervert our Judgment in the most important Points, as well as for many other Reasons, ought to be immediately checked and suppressed. Let us likewise guard against superstitious and enthusiastic Opinions in Religion, than which, if they become extravagant, nothing will be more destructive to the Mind, and more effectually subvert and corrupt all our natural Sentiments and Principles: Against these we should defend Ourselves, by a free Use of our Reason, for acquiring just Notions of God, and the Service which Mankind naturally owe to him; and by a diligent and impartial Study of the Scriptures, for acquainting Ourselves farther with his Will, and particularly for knowing what those Duties are, which depend purely on positive Institution. And, in the last Place, let us beware of refining too nicely on Points of Morality, a Thing, which many, who can find no Shelter in the Absurdities of

Superstition and Enthusiasm, fly to; and SERM.
I.
which, under a Pretence of explaining and

stating their Duty more precisely, gives them often an Opportunity of evading it, and reconciles them to Practices, quite repugnant to the Sense and Feeling of every plain common Man, and which, without such Artifice, would never sit easy on their own Minds. Against this Self-delusion we should take Precautions, by hearkening gladly to the natural Voice of our Consciences, which in most Cases will be a sure Direction to us; and by accustoming Ourselves to Deliberation, wherever the least Doubt arises, as to the Goodness of the Actions which we are about to do, and forbearing to act, till we are satisfied that our Conduct will at least be consistent with the general Principles of our moral Approbations; and by considering the Folly of deceiving Ourselves in Matters of this Nature; that all that we gain by it, is only a little present Ease in some unmanly Gratifications, and that at last it must issue in our utter Confusion and Misery. The Necessity of thus stopping up the several Sources, from whence the Blindness or Depravation of our Minds can proceed; of guarding against whatever would extinguish, impair, or corrupt our

SERM. natural Notions of Morality, is abundantly
 I. evident, from the Consideration of the dismal Consequences of Suffering these Notions to be obscured or defaced in us: As our moral Judgment is the Light and Director of our Life, if this be prejudiced, seduced, or debauched, the Foundation of a good Conduct is subverted, the very Fountain and Principle of Virtue is obstructed, or poison'd within us; so that nothing excellent and becoming our Nature is to be expected from us, but we must necessarily fall into a State of the grossest Error and Wickedness. *If the Light that is in thee be Darkness, how great is that Darkeness!*

Matt. vi.
 23.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

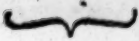
The Efficacy of Religious Faith.

H E B. X. 38.

Now the Just shall live by Faith.

AS Mankind are formed with a Power S E R M. II.
 or Faculty, which furnishes them
 with such Notices and Impressions
 of moral Good and Evil, that they must
 necessarily approve and love the One, and
 condemn and hate the Other; They are,
 by the very Constitution of their Nature,
 subject to the Law of Virtue and Morality.
 This Sense of Virtue and Vice, which is
 born with us, and which is so interwoven
 in our Frame and Make, that our Beings
 must be extinguished, before it can be to-
 tally lost, is the first and great Source of
 all moral Obligations; which both gives us
 a Conviction of our Duty, and urges us to
 perform it, antecedently to the Appoint-

SERM. ment of positive Laws, and to all Confide-

II.  ration of the Benefits which will redound to ourselves from the Performance of it: And in Fact, This Sense, or Power, of all the Principles in our Nature, has always the greatest Influence in producing that Degree of Virtue and Goodness, which is to be found among Mankind. But as there is a great Variety of Principles in human Nature, some of which, from the want of due Government, interfere in their Operation, with our Sense of *Right and Wrong*, and sometimes grow strong enough to impair, controul, and overcome it, it is necessary for maintaining the just Prerogative of this Principle, and establishing it, according to its Dignity and Rank, in the supreme Command in the Mind, that it be cherished, improved, and invigorated, not only by an habitual Compliance with its Directions, but by calling to its Aid, all the Principles, which can yield it any Support and Assistance. Among the several Principles, which improve and strengthen our Perceptions of moral Good and Evil, and give them a greater Force and Efficacy upon our Conduct, That of a Religious Faith is of the first Consideration and Importance. By this I understand a firm Belief,

lief, or Persuasion of the Existence and Per-
fections of God, and of a future State of

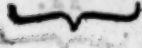
SERM.

II.

Rewards and Punishments. This is the

Faith which the Apostle mentions in the Text, as the animating Principle of a good Man's Life, and the great Support of his Virtue in Times of Distress; for in the first Verse of the following Chapter, he informs us that the Faith which he speaks of, is the *Substance*, or rather, a substantial and well-grounded Expectation of *Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen*; and what those Things are, which, though not perceived by our outward Senses, are yet the Objects of our Faith, he explains particularly at the sixth Verse, telling us that They are the Being of God, and the Rewards of another World: *But without Faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* It is not my Intention at present, to enter into the Proofs, either of the Existence of a Deity, or of the Certainty of a future State. The first is so loudly and fully declared by the Voice of universal Nature, that the Man must be stupidly inattentive, or obstinately prejudiced, who does not admit and acknowledge it.

SERM. it. And the latter Principle has so close a

II.  Connexion with the first, and is so probable from the very Nature of the human Soul, and so necessary to be admitted for the Order of the Universe; besides its receiving the strongest Confirmation from the Revelation of Christianity, that there can hardly be any Person of tolerable Reflection and Seriousness of Mind, who will not easily believe it: At least none who receive the Gospel, will have any Doubts of the Truth of it at all. Supposing, therefore, the Existence of God, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments, to be received and acknowledged Principles, what I propose, in the following Part of this Discourse, is to shew that our Belief of these Points, coincides and co-operates with our natural Sense of moral Good and Evil; that it always puts Life and Vigour into our Perceptions of Virtue, and proves the great, or the only Support of the Integrity of Men in several Circumstances in which they may happen to be: And after this, to make some useful Reflections upon the Subject.

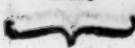
That our Faith of a Deity and a future Life, falls in with our natural Notions of of Virtue and Vice, and conspires to produce the same Conduct in us, which the

original Light of our Consciences, directs S E R M.
and guides us to, will be exceedingly evi- II.

dent, if we attend to the true Notion of God, and a future State. According to any rational Opinion which we can form of the Deity, he is a Being possessed not only of every natural Power and Perfection, but of all moral Excellencies: He is not only infinite, eternal, omniscient, and almighty, but perfectly holy, righteous, and good; he not only made the World, and preserves it by a constant Exertion of his Power, but exercises a most wise, just, and good Dominion over it; particularly he is to be considered, not only as the natural, but as the moral Governor of Mankind, who observes their Conduct as rational and moral Agents, and approves their Virtue, and is displeased with their Wickedness; and who in Consequence of this, makes their Happiness or Misery to depend, in a great Measure, upon their good, or bad Behaviour, even in this World; and will make them to do so, much more remarkably in the next. For as to a future State; according to the Notices which both Reason and Revelation give of it, it is to be considered as a State of equal Retribution, in which, *Every one shall reap what he has* Gal. iv. 7.

here

SERM. *here sowed*; in which, the Men who have

II.  duly cultivated their intellectual and moral Powers, and improved themselves in all virtuous Qualities, shall receive the Fruits of their Improvements, in an Increase of their Knowledge and Virtue, in the most delightful Sense of the Approbation and Favour of their Creator, and in an Advancement to a State of the highest Dignity, Honour, and Joy; and those who have abused and corrupted the noble Faculties and Affections of their Nature, and contracted Habits of Vice, shall be condemned and rejected by God, and sink into extreme Baseness, Disgrace, and Misery.

Now these being the just Notions of a Deity, and of a future Life, it must be very easy to see, that the Belief of the Existence of God, and the Expectation of a future State, coincide directly with our natural Perceptions of moral Good and Evil, that they greatly support, confirm, and enliven these Perceptions, and most powerfully urge us to the same Behaviour and Measures in Life, which our Consciences approve, and prompt us to pursue.

Our Nature is, indeed, so well formed for the Practice of Virtue; we have such a quick Sense of its Dignity and Excellence,
and

and we have Propensions and Affections SERM.
which lead us so strongly to the Actions II.
which our Minds approve, that very often
in pursuance of the generous Dispositions
of our Hearts, and the inward Sense of our
Minds, or the natural Dictates of our Con-
sciences, concerning the Good or Evil, the
Excellence or Baseness of our Conduct,
without any direct or immediate Considera-
tion of God, or a future Existence, we
acquit ourselves in our Conversation and In-
tercourse in the World, very worthily and
honourably. This is what must be easily
allowed by Every One, who has made any
Reflections on himself, or any Observations
on the Temper and Behaviour of Other
Men. But when besides our having a just
Sense of the Worth and Loveliness of Vir-
tue, we have likewise a lively Persuasion
that we are always acting under the Eye of
a Being, infinite in Power, Wisdom, Pu-
rity, and Goodness, who is our Creator and
righteous Governor, who knows all our
Actions, and the most secret Inclinations of
our Hearts, and can approve of nothing in
us but true Integrity and Goodness, and
who hates all Iniquity and Vice; when we
firmly believe that this Being is the Patron
of Virtue, and the Enemy of Vice even in
this

SERM. this World, and that he will render the

II. Cause of the one for ever glorious and triumphant, and that of the other utterly contemptible and miserable in the next; surely with this Persuasion and Faith, we shall proceed with the most active Zeal and Diligence in the Ways of Righteousness. In contemplating the Scene which this Belief opens up to us, we shall find many of the most prevalent Principles in our Nature most sensibly touched and moved, and exciting us strongly to improve ourselves in all morally good Qualities; such as our *Love of Virtue Itself*, which cannot but make us, with great Ardour, to aspire to that State, in which we shall with the utmost Freedom and Vigour exert our generous Affections, and make a continual Progress in those Excellencies, which will tend to the everlasting Dignity and Perfection of our Nature; our *Desire of Esteem and Honour*, which can by no means be so effectually gratified, as by the Approbation of that Being, who has the Standard of Worth and Excellence in himself, and *is the God of Knowledge*, by whom *Actions* and Characters are impartially weighed; and the Congratulations which we shall receive in a Society of Spirits, free from those Prejudices

1 Sam. ii. 3.

ices which so miserably darken and corrupt the Minds of poor Mortals, and who will judge of us according to our real Deserts: Our *Desire of Pleasure and Happiness* also, which can no way be so well provided for, as by the Gratifications which the Exercise of good Affections, and the Consciousness of Merit immediately afford, and by securing the Protection of the Governor of the World in this Life, and entitling ourselves to the Rewards, which he has prepared for his faithful Servants in the next: Likewise our *Aversion to Shame*, the Sense of which must operate most intensely in the Presence of God, and the several Orders of superior Beings in the other World; and, lastly, our *Fear of Misery*, which, if we desert the Interests of Virtue, we have reason to apprehend will overtake us under the present Administration of Providence; and which, without Amendment, must certainly be our Portion, most dreadfully, in a future State. In a word, a steady and lively Faith of these great Principles of Religion, concerning the Existence of God, and the Certainty of a future Life, will both co-operate directly with our natural Sense and Love of Virtue, and raise and invigorate such Sentiments and Dispositions

in

SERM. in us, as will guard and support us in the

II. Practice of Virtue in all Events, and enable us to make Advances in it, as much beyond what we should have made without its Influence and Assistance, as a Body in Motion will be accelerated, by a new Force impressed on it, in the same Direction, equal, or superior to That, with which it proceeded before.

The Efficacy of this Belief on all, in whom it is firm and lively, must be very considerable at all Times; but the Use and Importance of it, will be best understood, by considering how it operates in certain Cases, where, without its Assistance, we should be very cool in the Cause of Virtue, or in great Danger of deserting, and apostatizing entirely from it.

First, There is hardly any Man of Reflection, who must not experience a great Inequality of Temper in himself, with respect to almost all the Objects presented to his Mind. The noblest and best do not always appear in the same Light to him, nor strike and move him at some Times, as they do at Others. Virtue itself, the fairest of all intellectual Beauties, has, by no Means, an uniform Influence on Persons even of good Dispositions: Notwithstanding

ing its intrinsic Charms are invariably the same, yet as our Faculties cannot at all times behold them with the same Steadiness and Attention, the Impressions which they make on us, are not always equally strong and attractive. On the contrary, our Taste of moral Beauty and Excellence is apt sometimes to grow flat, and our Desires of it to cool and languish; and while this is our Temper, we shall at least make no Progress towards Perfection, if we are even able to maintain our Ground, and escape from the Infection of Vice. Now to correct this Insensibility and Indolence of Mind, which the best of us sometimes fall into with respect to Virtue, to revive and quicken our Perceptions of moral Goodness, and to inspire us with Ardour and Zeal in Well-doing, it must be of great Use to reflect that our Approbation of Virtue, is agreeable to the Approbation of God himself, and will be finally justified by his unerring Sentence; that the Course of Life which the generous Sentiments and Affections of our Nature direct and excite us to, not only contributes to our present Dignity and Felicity, but lays the Foundation for our attaining to Every thing that is lovely, honourable, and joyful for Ever. This

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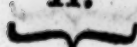
SERM.
II.

SERM. Persuasion firmly rooted in the Mind, and
II. frequently recalled, and rendered habitual
to it, must effectually awaken and invigorate our natural Sense of moral Excellence, cure us of our Sloth and Indifference in the Practice of Virtue, and make us exert our utmost Endeavours to abound and excel in all Goodness.

Another Case, wherein the great Importance of the Belief of the Existence of God, and the Truth of a future State may be seen, is that of the Recovery of the degenerate and corrupted Part of Mankind to a State of Virtue and Goodness. Tho' the Faculty of discerning moral Good and Evil be essential to our Constitution, and is never to be intirely suppressed, or lost in us; yet when we give way for a long time to evil Desires and Passions, and contract inveterate Customs of Vice, we necessarily impair and corrupt this Faculty, and diminish its Influence and Authority so much, as to render it quite insufficient for effecting our Amendment and Reformation. Speak to a Man deeply corrupted, who is under the Power of strong Lusts, and confirmed Habits of Wickedness, of the Loveliness and Merit of moral Virtue; paint its Charms in the most lively Colours; and represent

represent the Deformity and Odiousness of S E R M,
the Vices to which he is addicted, in the II.
strongest Light to him; and you will soon
find that he will be but little touched, or
moved with such Objects; that his Relish
of moral Beauty is so much spoiled and vi-
tiated, that any View that can be given
him of it, will make but a very weak Im-
pression, and produce no great or lasting
Effect in him. So that if he is ever to be
reclaimed, he must be taken hold on by
some other Principle, than his Approba-
tion, or Desire of Virtue itself. And as the
Fear of Misery, and the Desire of Happi-
ness, will most probably be the strongest
Principles in his Mind, a Persuasion, that
the Course in which he is engaged, will de-
prive him of the highest Good, and plunge
him in the most dismal Ruin, must have
the greatest Force for awakening and
alarming him. This Persuasion, or Belief,
if it can be well fixed in his Mind, will, if
any thing at All will, restrain and check him
in his evil Course. And though, it is cer-
tain, that the abstaining from Vice through
mere Fear, or Terror, has no Merit, yet
it is of great Use to stop a Man in the Ca-
reer of his Wickedness, even by this Consi-
deration; because by this Means he gets an

SERM. Opportunity for Recollection, and Reflect-

II.  ing upon his own State. And if once he becomes serious and thoughtful, it may be expected that the Principle of Conscience will in time revive, and recover its Authority in him; that he will, by Degrees, be conceiving a Hatred of Vice, and a Love of Virtue, upon a View of their respective Natures; and will at last perform his Duty, from the ingenuous Principles of Approbation and Affection. And thus, *the Fear of God*, as the Son of *Syrach* speaks, *may be the beginning of his Love, and Faith the beginning of cleaving to him.*

Ecclus.

XXV. 12.

Again, the great Use of a firm and lively Faith of the Being of God, and a future State, is very apparent in the Case of Men's falling under strong Temptations to commit any Acts of Wickedness. This is well known to be a Case incident to all Men, none being so great and good, as not to be sometimes exposed to Temptations, by which their Virtue is endangered, or by which they may very possibly be surprized, and overcome. It must, therefore, be of vast Consequence, even to Those, who have the most quick natural Sense of all moral Obligations, to have some Principle in their Minds, which may support and animate
their

their Notions of Virtue, which may even strike them with some Fear and Awe, and prevent their Falling, or Stumbling, in such critical and dangerous Circumstances. And what will better support and secure them, and make them more afraid of yielding to Temptations, and more resolute in repelling them, than a deep and strong Conviction of their being always in the View of a supreme Governor and Judge, whose Approbation and Favour, which are of infinite Moment to them, depend intirely on their good Behaviour, and whom they are bound, not only in Point of Interest, but by all the Ties of Duty and Gratitude to obey; and an habitual lively Persuasion that this Life is a State of Preparation and Discipline for Eternity; so that one false Step taken by them at present, may draw on their everlasting Ruin, whereas by bearing up bravely against Temptations, and maintaining an inflexible Integrity, they acquire such a strong and confirmed Temper of Virtue, as will endure for ever, and be an eternal Source of the highest Honour and Delight to them. This Persuasion well laid in the Mind, must have a most happy Influence for guarding our Virtue, and insuring our Steadiness in our Duty, in those

SERM. trying and hazardous Situations, in which,
 II. in the ordinary Course of the World, we
 shall, notwithstanding the greatest Caution
 that we can use, be sometimes placed. Of
 the great Efficacy of such a religious Faith,
 to fortify the Mind against the Power of
 Temptation, we have a remarkable Instance
 in the History of *Joseph*: That excellent
 Person, indeed, had a just Sense and De-
 testation of the Crime to which he was so-
 licited, from a Consideration of its intrin-
 sic Baseness and Vileness; but that which
 confirmed him in the Resolution of pre-
 serving his Innocence, and made him to
 triumph easily over the Temptation, was
 the Conviction which he had, that a Com-
 pliance with it would have been a most
 grievous Offence against God: *How*, said
 Gen. xix. he, *can I do this great Wickedness, and Sin*
 9. *against God!*

Lastly, the vast Importance of a lively
 Faith in God, and a confident Expectation
 of a future State, is extremely evident in
 the Case of a Man's Falling into any deep
 Distress, or his Suffering *Persecution for*
the Sake of Righteousness. In the calm and
 smooth Scenes of Life, a Man who has a
 clear Perception of the Dignity of moral
 Virtue, and good Dispositions of Heart,
 may

may certainly do many worthy and commendable Actions, even at Times when he has no Thoughts of the Duty which he owes to God, and the Rewards of a future State, in his Mind. But when he falls into a ruffled, or tempestuous State; when he is exposed to sharp Afflictions, either outward or inward; when a Storm of Persecution arises, and he is harrassed, racked, and tormented, for his Adherence to the Cause of Truth and Virtue; he will, in all Probability, stand in need of some other Principle to support him in his Integrity, and to make him bear his Afflictions with Patience and Decency, than a bare Conviction of the Merit of Virtue. And nothing, it is certain, will so effectually carry him through the calamitous Scene, in which he is involved, as a firm Belief in God, as the wise and just Governor of the World, who is ever the sure Friend of Goodness; and who, though he may suffer his faithful Servants to fall into diverse severe Distresses, for the Exercise and Improvement of their Virtues, yet will not finally desert them, but will both support them under the Trials which he appoints to them here, and most gloriously reward them for their Fidelity and Perseverance in

SERM. Goodness hereafter. This Faith, firmly set-

II.  tled in the Mind, will, indeed, dispel the blackest Clouds which gather over a good Man in the Times of Distress, and make

Pf. xcii. *Light to spring up to him in Darknes.* In
4. virtue of this Persuasion, he will not only cheerfully acquiesce in all the common Evils of Life, but will be able to face the greatest Dangers, and to act an heroic Part under all the Sufferings which the Hatred and Rage of Men can bring upon him for keeping a good Conscience. Of the Truth of this, we have a most eminent Proof in the brave and constant Spirit of *the Apostles and first Christians*, when exposed to the most terrible Persecutions, which was chiefly raised and cherished in them, by a firm Confidence in God, and a lively Hope of a blessed Immortality.

Upon the whole, therefore, it is sufficiently plain, that this Principle of Faith, co-operates with, and greatly assists our natural Sense of moral Good and Evil; and that indeed the Strength and Vigour of the virtuous Affections, the Order and Uniformity of a good Conduct, and the greatest Sublimity and Perfection in Virtue which Men attain to in this World, depend upon, and are owing to the Influence of it.

I shall

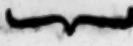
I shall now make a few useful Reflexions on what has been discoursed.

SERM.
II.

I. We may see the mischievous Tendency of the Principles of Atheism and Infidelity, and the Necessity of guarding against the Prevalence and Influence of them. The Patrons of the atheistic Scheme have indeed Sometimes alledged in favour of their own Principles, that they contribute to the Benefit and Advantage of Mankind; as they release them from the vain Terrors and Restraints of Superstition, and restore to them the Enjoyment of the original Rights and Liberties of their Nature. But this is the vainest Pretence that can be; depending on the Suppositions, that there is no rational Evidence of the Existence of a Deity, and consequently that all Regard to him is at best but idle and unprofitable; that there is no natural Difference between moral Good and Evil; that Virtue is but an empty Name; that Mankind are not born under the Law of Righteousness, and that the only Rules and Measures of their Conduct are the Informations and Impulses of their inferior Senses, Appetites, and Passions. Allowing these Principles to be just, there might be some Colour for the Conclusion, which the Advocates of the
atheistic

SERM. atheistic Cause have drawn from them ;

II. but as quite the Reverse is true, as the
Proofs of the Being of God, and of the
Reality and Obligation of moral Virtue are
clear and irrefragable ; as both our Reason
and Experience assure us that the true Dig-
nity, Freedom, and Happiness of human
Nature result from the Practice of Virtue ;
and as it is certain that the Belief of a Deity
and a just Providence, extending to all the
Affairs of Mankind, both in this, and in
a future State, is the great Support and Se-
curity of Virtue, without which, the very
best would arrive at no great Perfection in
it, and the greatest Part of Men would fall
off from it, and run on in a Course of
Vice ; it is plain, that the Principles of
Atheism which destroy this Belief, must be
of the most pernicious and fatal Conse-
quence. And though the Tendency of
Principles, however inconvenient or mis-
chievous, is not the most direct Argument
of their Falshood, yet the Consideration
of the very pernicious Consequences of
Atheism, may, at least, put all who are
otherwise convinced of its utter Absurdity,
upon the most vigorous Opposition to it,
and make every one extremely cautious,
how he falls in with a Scheme, which
will,

will, most probably, subvert his Integrity SERM.
and Happiness, and plunge him in the II.
Depths of Wickedness and Misery. 

2. From what has been said, we may see the Absurdity of the Notions which many have entertained of Faith, as if it was nothing but a confident Reliance upon our Saviour, as having fulfilled the Law of God in our Stead, and as supplying us with an imputed Righteousness, when we have no real Righteousness in Ourselves; or, as if it was only a naked Assent of the Understanding, and the whole Design of it was to fill our Heads with unfruitful Speculations and vain Conceits, or, perhaps, to make us drive on, as hard as we can, in Opposition to all that Common Sense and Reason suggest to the Contrary, in believing Contradictions, and receiving the most palpable Absurdities as adorable Mysteries, and incontestable Divine Truths. These are Things quite remote from that Faith which is required from us as Men and Christians, which is always a Principle founded upon rational Evidence, and of a practical Tendency and Influence, which assists and strengthens our good Dispositions, and supports and enlivens us in a steady and uniform Course of Virtue. What the
Apostle

SERM. Apostle says of Christianity in general, is

II. true of all the genuine Principles both of
 natural and revealed Religion, that they

1 Tim. vi. 3. are *Doctrines according to Godliness*; calculated and intended, not for gratifying our Curiosity or amusing and puzzling our Minds, but for forming and improving a solid Temper of all Piety and Goodness in us; and without this Effect, it is certain, that our Belief of them will not have any Use or Virtue in it: *For as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead also.*

Jam. ii. 26.

3. We may here observe the perfect Consistency, and close Connexion of Faith and Morality. Attempts have been made to set these at Variance, for different Reasons: Some observing St. Paul in some Passages of his Epistles, to ascribe our *Justification to Faith*, in Opposition to the Works of the Law, have concluded Faith and good Works to have no Affinity or Relation to one another; and that Faith is *all in all* in Religion, while moral Virtue is of no Importance in it. But it is very plain, that by Faith in those Passages, in which St. Paul speaks of it as the Means of our Justification, is meant either the *Christian Religion* in general, in Opposition

tion to the *Institution of Moses*, which was found weak and ineffectual for the Justification of Men, or bringing them into a State of Righteousness and Acceptance with God; or, more probably in some of the Passages, Men's Acceptance of the Terms of Grace and Salvation which were then offered in the Gospel, upon which they were immediately admitted to the Benefit of Pardon, in Opposition to any antecedent *Works of Righteousness*, upon which they could found a Plea of Justification; though the Practice of all good Works, according to the whole Tenor of the Gospel, as well as the Dictates of Nature and Reason, was absolutely necessary to their final Justification before God. So that the Apostle had not the least Intention in these Places, to set the Belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel, in Opposition to the moral Virtues required by the Laws of it: On the Contrary, it is certain that Faith, in the common Acceptation of the Word, according to St. *Paul*, as well as all the other Sacred Writers, is a practical Principle, which *worketh by Love*, or produceth in us the Sincere Love of God, and of Mankind. Others, in a more refined Way, have endeavoured to make a Separation between

SERM.
II.

SERM. between Faith and moral Virtue; alledging
II. that the Influence of Faith derogates from
the Excellence and Merit of Virtue, which
springs only from noble, generous, and dis-
interested Principles. Now allowing this
to be the Case, as it really is, with respect
to Virtue, there is yet no Reason to ima-
gine, that the Influence of Faith will ever
hurt its Interests; or, that this Influence is
not necessary to make Virtue shine out in
its full Lustre and Perfection. For in the
Scene which Faith discovers, such Objects
are exhibited and presented, as must ef-
fectually draw forth every noble Power,
and every generous Affection of the Soul;
and make them unfold and exert them-
selves with much greater Force and Vigour,
than by any other Means they could pos-
sibly be brought to do. Besides that the
Fear of Misery, and desire of private
Good, which the Consideration of the Ob-
jects of our Faith naturally excites, are
plainly necessary to keep the Generality of
Men in good Order; and though the Act-
ing solely from these Principles, would de-
serve but little Approbation, yet the Per-
sons who are at first restrained from Vice
only by means of them, will certainly in
Time be struck with the Beauty of Virtue
itself,

itself, and afterwards proceed freely in a SERM.
Course of Righteousness, and offer to God II.
a liberal and manly Service of Love and
Affection.

4. As the Belief of a Deity, and a future State, is of so great Consequence to the Support and Establishment of Virtue; and as Christianity has laid down the most rational and consistent Scheme with respect to the Deity, concerning whom the greatest Part of Men have usually fallen into *vain* Rom. i. 21.
Imaginations; and as it has confirmed all the natural Proofs of a future Life, and given such a strong additional Assurance of it, as must take away from the Mind all Doubts and Suspicions of its Reality, we may from hence see the great Use and Importance of this Religion. This, indeed, is by no means, the only Advantage which the Cause of Virtue receives from the Revelation of the Gospel; but this alone is of so great Moment, as must make all who wish well to the Interests of Virtue and of Mankind, greatly to value the Religion of our Saviour, and determine them, upon obtaining a rational Conviction of its Truth, heartily to embrace it, and to *hold fast the* Heb. x. 23.
Profession of it, without wavering.

5. Lastly,

SERM. 5. Lastly, we may observe the Necessity
II. of confirming and enlivening our Faith in
God, and raising and animating our Expectations of a future State. As the Strength of our Virtue, and our Perseverance in Integrity, depend exceedingly upon our doing this, we should apply Ourselves to it with great Zeal and Care. And to this Purpose, we should always have a clear View of the solid Proofs or Arguments which convince us of the Being of God, and his wise and just Providence over the World, and of the Certainty of another Life. The implicit and lazy Assent which we usually give to these great Principles of Religion, has but little Force for operating on our Affections, and governing our Conduct, and is easily borne down by Temptations: Whereas, if we acquired a strong and habitual Conviction of the Truth of Them, by a Serious Examination of the Evidences which support Them, and by reviving and revolving these frequently in our Minds; and, if withal, we raised our Apprehensions of the Deity, by representing him often to Ourselves in the most lively Characters of Beauty and Majesty, and dwelt on the delightful Contemplation of the sublime Glories and Felicities of
Futurity.

Futurity, we should certainly find our Per-
suasion of the Existence of God, and of **II.**
the Truth of a future State, a most fruit-
ful Principle of all Virtue in us; which
would raise us above the Power of Temp-
tations, and give us *a Victory over the* 1 John v.
World, and make us to continue *stedfast* 4. Cor. xv.
and unmovable in the Work of the Lord, 58.
and always to abound in it.

F SER.

S E R M O N III.

The true Happiness of Mankind.

ISAIAH III. x.

Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him.

SERM.
III.

OF all our Perceptions Those of Virtue and Happiness, are the most important and interesting, and excite Desires and Affections in us, which are plainly the strongest and most active Principles in our Nature. Nothing, therefore, can be of greater Consequence to the good Order, and true Enjoyment of Life, than the Harmony of these Perceptions and Affections, and their co-operating to the same End and Purpose. It has been always the Business of the Adversaries of the Cause of Virtue, to set them at Variance, and to make a Separation between them, alledging that our natural Appetite and Desire of Happiness,

Happiness, leads us into a Course quite SERM.
III.
contrary to that, to which the Law of Vir-
tue, or of our Duty, directs us. If this
was really the Case, the Condition of Man-
kind would indeed be very miserable; as
they would find themselves to be perpetu-
ally in a State of violent Struggle and Con-
flict, the Consequences of which would ne-
cessarily be great Inconsistency and Confu-
sion in their Conduct, together with the
most grievous Distraction, Uneasiness, and
Remorse of Mind. But this Pretence is
without all Foundation; for however the
private Affections of the Men who mistake
their true Interest, and have corrupted their
Hearts, may prompt them to Actions,
which can never be reconciled with their
natural Sense of their Duty, yet in those
who judge truly of their Happiness, and
pursue it according to the Intention of Na-
ture, there are no Desires of private Good,
which interfere in the least with their Ap-
probation and Love of Virtue: On the con-
trary, such Persons pursue Virtue, not only
as an Object of their highest Esteem, but
as the Source of all Good to them, as yield-
ing them Pleasures the most satisfying and
felicitating that can be.

SERM. The Prophet has given us Authority in
 III. the Text, to *say to the Righteous, that it*
 { *shall be well with them,* to pronounce the
 Men of Piety and Virtue truly happy; and
 in the following Part of the Verse, a very
 substantial Reason is assigned for our say-
 ing so; *for they shall eat of the Fruit of*
their Doings, in the very Works in which
 they chiefly employ themselves, they shall
 meet with the highest Enjoyment, and find
 their Desires of Pleasure, and several Powers
 of perceiving Good, most nobly and fully
 gratified.

For explaining and illustrating this Sub-
 ject of the Blessedness of the Righteous, it
 may be of Use to premise a few Observa-
 tions in general, concerning the proper Hap-
 piness, or chief Good of Mankind.

As the Happiness of any Beings must
 arise from the Gratification of their natural
 Powers of Perception, and especially Those
 of Them which yield the most intense and
 durable Pleasures; for understanding where-
 in the true Happiness of Men consists, we
 must reflect a little on our several Senses, or
 Faculties of receiving Pleasure, and which
 of them are the Inlets of the most pure and
 solid Joys and Delights to us. Now it
 must be evident to every One who is at all

acquainted with his own Constitution, that SERM.
besides his external Senses, whereby he ap- III.

prehends, and receives agreeable Sensations from outward Objects, he has several inward Powers or Faculties, which being gratified with their proper Objects, afford him a great Variety of Entertainment and Pleasure. Such, in the first place, is his Taste of Truth and Knowledge, and his Sense of Beauty, Harmony, Order, Proportion, and the like, which, when duly cultivated, are Sources of many exquisite and elegant Amusements and Delights. Such likewise is his publick and social Sense, which makes him often zealously to interest himself in the Concerns of Others, and gives him a generous Pleasure in promoting their Happiness, and a Share in all the innocent Joys which he knows them to partake of. And such, above all others, is the Faculty of discerning and approving the pious, honest, and kind Affections of his own Heart; which makes him conscious, in the Exercise of these Affections, of an intrinsick Dignity and Worth, which gives him a Character with himself, and other intelligent and moral Beings; and as the Consequence of this, the joyful Hope of the Esteem and Love of the wiser and

SERM. better part of Mankind, and, which is of
 III. infinitely greater Moment, of the Protec-
 tion of the Governor of the World in this
 Life, and his Approbation and Favour for
 ever in the next.

* These are the principal Capacities or Powers of Enjoyment, which belong to our Nature. Some of them we have in common with some of the inferior Kinds of Animals, I mean the outward Organs of Sensation; and if there was nothing higher or more excellent in our Constitution, our great Felicity would consist in providing for our animal Life, and in enjoying all sensual Gratifications, as long, and with as high a Relish, as could be. But as our Creator has been much more liberal to us; as he has endowed us with noble Faculties, which raise us far above the brutal Natures, which ally us to the superior Orders of Beings, and make us in some Degree ca-
 pable

* It may, perhaps, be thought, that in giving an Account of the Happiness of Men, some Notice should be taken of That which spontaneously arises merely upon our being in a perfectly sound and calm State of Body and Mind, free from all Pain and Perturbation. It is certain that there is an Ease flowing from hence, which agreeably fills up several long Intervals in the Lives of many Persons; yet no great Account can be made of it, in calculating the Happiness of Mankind, who being endowed with a great Variety of perceptive and active Powers, attain to their Perfection and Felicity, not by Indolence and Inactivity, but by exerting their Powers effectually about the Objects which are naturally suited and adapted to Them.

pable of their high and beatific Exercises, SERM.
the Operations and Perceptions of these III.

sublimier Powers in our Constitution, must be chiefly considered in making an Estimate of our true Perfection and Happiness. Indeed none of the Pleasures and Satisfaction which are here provided for us, none of our lowest sensitive Gratifications, are to be despised or rejected: They are all to be thankfully received, as Instances, or Effects of the Divine Bounty, for rendering our present State more supportable and comfortable to us. But if we had no other Pleasures than those which flowed in upon us by our external Senses, tho' we had them in the greatest Affluence, and enjoyed them with the most exquisite Taste, we should not at all be happy; nay, it is certain, that we should find ourselves very wretched in the Want of those Gratifications, of which, our intellectual, social, and moral Powers are capable. Indeed the chief Good of an Affluence of the Means of sensitive Pleasure, is derived, not from the private Gratifications which it affords to the Possessor, but from some Reference, which it is always supposed to have to Society, and the carrying on a decent and generous, a kind and friendly Commerce in Life. Without

SERM. some Imagination of this sort, the Pomp
III. and Luxury of what is called High-living,
would soon fall into Disesteem even with
Those, who, perhaps, have no fixed No-
tion of any higher Enjoyments. And with
Men of Reflection, it is certain, that sensi-
ble Pleasures will be always thought the
smallest Part of our Happiness; as they are
only the Satisfactions of our lowest Powers
of Perception, and are so very short and
transient, perishing with the Moment of
Enjoyment, leaving no agreeable Relish be-
hind them, but often Satiety and Disgust;
and as they are of no Use to support or re-
lieve us under the Calamities of Life, and
sometimes hardly yield a sufficient Recom-
pence for the Pains and Trouble which we
take in procuring them.

If to the Gratifications of the external
Senses, we should add those which arise
from the Pursuit of speculative Truth, the
Acquisition of Knowledge, the Contem-
plation of Beauty, Harmony, Symmetry,
Art, Genius, and the like; tho' these ap-
pear to our superior Powers, much more
worthy of our Pursuit, than any merely
sensual Indulgences; as they are all more
refined and durable; as some of them open
and enlarge our Faculties, and others of
them

them polish and adorn our Manners, and SERM.
wonderfully sooth and solace us under some III.

smaller Uneasinesses and Perturbations; yet as the Value of these Enjoyments, as well as our sensitive Pleasures, depends in a great Measure on the Connexion which they have with some social and moral Delights; as they are always found in Experience to diminish and flatten by Familiarity and Use, and are totally insufficient to support us under the severer Distresses, to which we are often exposed; it is very plain, that as the true Happiness of Men consists not in sensitive Enjoyments, so neither in the Pleasures of Knowledge, and the Gratifications of their imaginative Powers.

We must proceed, therefore, to the Consideration of the Pleasures received by our other Senses and Faculties, our publick and social Sense, and Faculty of moral Discernment. And whoever reflects upon himself while he gratifies his publick Taste, and exercises his social Affections; while he contributes sincerely and effectually to the Good of his fellow Creatures; or, even while he contemplates the Happiness which they are by any means possessed of, and entertains himself with the Thought, that the universal Welfare of the Creation, notwithstanding

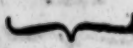
SERM. withstanding the Confusions and Distrac-
III. tions of this World, is secured by the Care
of a perfectly wise, powerful, just, and good
Providence; whoever, I say, reflects upon
his own Perceptions and Feelings, while
he is under the lively Influence of this
Temper, will certainly own them to be
extremely joyous and delightful: The Plea-
sures which spring from hence are pure and
clear, very stable and durable, and of great
Use to relieve and exhilarate a benevolent
Heart, under any Pains or Losses that are
at all tolerable. Again, when a Man re-
flects upon the Joy which he receives from
a self-approving Mind, from the Consci-
ousness of an inherent Excellence and Worth,
and a Sense of Merit with God and good
Men, he must undoubtedly be convinced
that of all the Pleasures which he has ever
experienced, this is of the greatest Moment
and Importance to him. This is a Joy
which so nearly and intimately affects us,
which so thoroughly penetrates our whole
Frame, and is so constant and permanent,
springing up fresh and lively upon every
Review of our Conduct, and so much aug-
mented by those most pleasing Expectati-
ons which naturally accompany it, that it
plainly constitutes the principal Part of our
Happiness:

Happiness: It is indeed equivalent to all SERM. our other Joys, and superior to them; as III. it alone has Strength enough to make us relish our Existence in all Events, to support us under the greatest natural Evils, and render us contented in the Absence of all other Satisfaction; and as it puts Life into all our other Pleasures, which if they were quite separated from it, would soon grow nauseous, or insipid.

Having premised thus much in General, concerning the proper Happiness of Men, it will be easy now to see that the Righteous are truly blessed, and that they of all Men enjoy the most compleat and perfect Felicity. By the *Righteous* we are to understand the Men of sincere Piety and Virtue, or the Persons possessed of the Affections of Reverence, Love, Gratitude, and Submission to God, and of Justice, Uprightness, Humanity, and Benevolence towards Men, and who uniformly exert these Affections in a Course of all good Actions. Now it is very plain, that there are no Pleasures of which Mankind are capable, which are not, or at least, may not, in the ordinary Course of Things, be enjoyed, and almost all of them in the highest Perfection, by the Men of this Character. For

SERM.

I. As to the Pleasures of the external
III. Senses: As these lie open to Persons of all
Characters, the Pious and Virtuous must
have their Share of Them as well as any
Others; there being nothing in their Tem-
per to restrain them from any Enjoyments
that are innocent: And such our sensitive
Gratifications, within certain Degrees and
Measures, undoubtedly are. It would be
doing great Injustice to the Principles of
Religion and Virtue, to represent them as
destructive of any part of the Happiness of
human Life; for even when these Princi-
ples restrain the Men in whom they pre-
vail, from all Excesses both in the Acqui-
sition and Use of sensitive good Things;
when They make them greatly to under-
value all Pleasures of this Kind, in Compa-
rison of more excellent and permanent Pos-
sessions and Enjoyments; they still leave
them at Liberty to indulge their Appetites
and Desires of them, as they easily may,
within the Bounds of Nature, and indeed
enable them to do it to great Advantage;
by obliging them to such Diligence and
good Oeconomy in the Conduct of their
Affairs, as will be the best Security for hav-
ing always the Means of any sensual Grati-
fications, which they can desire, in their
Power;

Power; and by inuring them to such a SERM.
strict Temperance and Moderation in the III.
Use of Them, as must quicken their Taste 
of Them, and render Them more capable
of enjoying the Good of Them, than the
Persons, who by an extravagant Course of
Voluptuousness, or Debauchery, stupify
their Senses, and pall their Appetites, can
usually be thought to be.

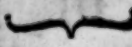
2. The same Thing may be said as to
the Pleasures resulting from the Acquisition
of Knowledge, the Exercise of ingenious
Arts, or the Contemplation of ingenious
Works, and of beautiful, regular, and har-
monious Objects. These being common
to all Sorts of Men, they must be in the
Power of the Righteous, as well as of any
Others: And supposing the Abilities of the
Virtuous for the Pursuit and Acquisition of
Knowledge, and their Capacity for Works
of Art and Genius, or their Taste for the
Contemplation of Them, and of the Ob-
jects of natural Beauty, Order, and the like,
to be naturally equal, it may be presumed
that the Pleasures arising from these Sour-
ces, will be rather more in their Power,
than they are in the Power of Others; as
the Principles which prevail in them must
make them more especially diligent in trea-
suring

SERM. furing up in their Minds the most useful
III. and entertaining Knowledge, and free them
from all violent Passions which would ruffle
and discompose them, and settle them in
an habitual Calmness and Serenity, which
is the only Temper, in which we can at-
tend to the Objects which entertain and
please the Imagination, so as to be deeply
struck, and agreeably affected and moved
by them.

3. As to the most important and principal Pleasures of Men, which are derived from the Exercise of our social and benevolent Affections, from the Consciousness of an internal Dignity and Excellence, from the Reflections of a self-applauding Mind, with their natural and joyful Attendants; it is apparent, not only that the Righteous enjoy these, but that They alone enjoy them in any Perfection. In the Character of the Righteous, the vigorous, steady, and uniform Exercise of all the social, kind, generous, and grateful Affections is included: They must, therefore, of course, feel all those most soft and exquisite Touches of Joy, which accompany the very Motions and Operations of these Affections; by these Channels, they not only communicate Good to their Fellows, in doing
which

which they find a most Divine Pleasure, SERM.
but participate of all their Satisfaction, and III.
receive that noble and permanent Delight
which proceeds from reflecting on the Provision which is made for the absolute and general Happiness of Mankind, by the universal Father and Governor of All. And as the Righteous must be sensible of their having and exerting these, and all other virtuous Affections, they must likewise necessarily have that most pure and solid Pleasure which flows from a Perception of their own Merit, and the Reflections of a Mind always easy and satisfied with itself; which must be greatly heightened by a Sense of that Honour and Esteem which they are entitled to from others, and that generous Applause and Congratulation which they actually receive from the Wise and Virtuous; and must grow up into the most perfect Joy, from the Hopes which naturally spring up in them, of obtaining the Approbation and Friendship of that great Being, who is the unerring Judge of Worth and Excellence, and from whose Favour they may promise themselves, not only Protection and Support in this World, but the Continuance of their Existence, and an Advancement to a State in which they will
be

SERM. be encreasing in Knowledge and Virtue,
III. and enjoy all the most manly and refined Gratifications for evermore. That this great Happiness is the sure Portion of the Righteous, is always plain to themselves from Experience ; and may be sufficiently evident to all who are acquainted with the Constitution of Nature, and the established Order, Connexions, and Tendencies of Things. And what distinguishes this Happiness of good Men, is, that as it is the greatest which can be enjoyed, so it is peculiar to Them : In the Joys or Pleasures issuing from other Sources, the Virtuous have a Share only in common with others, and sometimes in a lower Degree than many of a different Character ; but of those which flow from the Exercise of Virtue, and Consciousness of Merit, they are the sole Possessors and Proprietors. For however the most Vicious may sometimes do a good Action, and in Consequence of that, taste so much of the Pleasure of Virtue, as may be enough to convince them, if they would but seriously reflect, of their extreme Folly and Misery in parting with such a noble Happiness, for something which, in Comparison, is very mean and unsatisfying ; yet all bad Men are, and must necessarily be
Strangers

Strangers to that steady, uniform, and ever-SERM.
flowing Delight, which proceeds from a III.
settled Course of Humanity, Righteousness, 
and Piety; to that inward Serenity and
Tranquillity which good Men constantly
enjoy, to the Honour and fair Reputation
which attend such in the World, and to
those blessed Hopes which support them
under all the Distresses of Life, which make
their Deaths calm and peaceful, and their
Prospect of Futurity ravishing and trans-
porting. Instead of partaking of this in-
estimable Happiness, the Wicked, by the
very Order of Nature, are exposed to the
Racks and Tortures of bitter and enraged
Passions, to the Stings of Guilt, and the
Remorse and Anguish of a self-accusing
Mind; to Infamy and Contempt from the
wiser and better Part of their Fellows; to
Gloominess and Dejection in Adversity, to
dismal Presages, and alarming Fears of that
Being, who is the just Avenger of Unright-
eousness, and the supreme Disposer of the
Fate of Mankind. *This is the Portion of a* Job xx.
wicked Man, and the Heritage appointed ^{29.}
unto him by God.

From all these Considerations, it is abun-
dantly evident, that the Prophet has with
great Reason assured *the Righteous, that it*

G

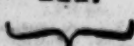
shall.

SERM. *shall be well with Them*, that their Title to

III. Happiness is the most firm and secure that can be; there being no Part of it which they do not stand upon, as a fair Foundation for obtaining a Share of, as any others; and the principal Articles of it, which vastly exceed every thing besides that can be called pleasant or good, and without which all other Pleasures, upon cool Reflection seem to be nothing, being appropriated to Them, which from the very Nature of Things They must partake of, and which no other Persons can possibly enjoy.

I shall now conclude with a few Reflections upon this Subject.

1. We may see the utter Absurdity of all those Superstitious Inventions, whereby Men propose to attain to a State of Happiness, and the Favour of God, without the Practice of moral Piety and Virtue. The Desire of Happiness, and especially that Part of it, which is of the highest Consequence, the Peace and Tranquillity of our Minds, and Hope of the Approbation and Acceptance of our Creator, is so strong and efficacious a Principle in our Nature, that all Men are endeavouring in some Way or other to gratify it: And the only

only proper Means of gratifying it, must SERM.
be very obvious to every Man of Confi- III.
deration, by the Exercise and Improve- 

ment of all pious and good Affections, which will be naturally accompanied with the highest Joy; by such a sincere, steady, and uniform Course of Righteousness, as will always bear a Review, and yield the most delightful Relish, and comfortable Hope, upon Reflection. But such is the Blindness and Folly of a great Part of Mankind, that they imagine they may obtain Peace of Mind, and Confidence towards God in quite different Methods. Many of them, may, perhaps, be convinced that the Practice of Virtue is indeed their Duty, and the best Foundation on which they can procure the Quiet of their Minds, and entitle themselves to the Favour of their Creator. But this being a Matter which they are not at all inclined to, they are willing to think they may accomplish the same Ends by other Expedients, such as Penances and Austerities, great Zeal in Points of Belief, high Pretences to Devotion, and the like; which are used in great Variety by them, according to the different Notions and Tempers which prevail in Them. But now all Attempts of this

SERM. kind, are plainly so many Struggles against
 III. Nature, and must therefore certainly fail
 of Success. It is indeed altogether as impossible to make Vice and Happiness by any means consistent, as it is to reconcile Light and Darkness, or to raise a great Building out of the most disagreeing and jarring Materials. And nothing, one would think, but a Total Want of Reflection, or the most wretched Prejudices, arising from a deep Corruption of Heart, can hinder any from discerning this Impossibility.

2. We may here see the Weakness of the Objection which has been often made to the Conduct of Providence, from the scanty Portion of Happiness assigned to good Men, compared with that enjoyed by the Wicked, in this World. This is an Objection which not only the Adversaries of all Religion have triumphed in, thinking it sufficient to overthrow the Belief of a wise and just Administration in the Universe; but which some pious Persons, in some gloomy Tempers, have thought very formidable, and to be solved only by the Prospect of a future State, in which the Measure of good Men's Happiness shall be compleated, and the Losses and Calamities which They have here endured, greater than what befel the
 Bad,

Bad, shall be abundantly compensated and S E R M.
made up to Them. Now allowing the III.

Fact to be, as the Objection represents it, the Difficulty could not indeed be removed, without supposing the Certainty of an equitable Distribution to be made to Mankind in a future State: But as in this Case, it would, perhaps, be somewhat hard to prove the Truth of a future Life, this is not the proper Answer to the Objection, which will easily admit of another Solution, which is, that it is founded on a Misrepresentation of Fact. For what can induce any to think the present Enjoyments of the Righteous to be inferior to those of the Wicked? The Persons who judge thus, must make a very false Calculation of the Happiness of human Life, computing it, probably, in Proportion to the Largeness of a Man's Fortune, the Height of his Power, Station, and the like. Now even as to these external Advantages, it is plain, that Providence does not confine them to the Vicious, more than to the Virtuous; they are Things generally to be purchased by the Skill and Industry of every one, and, in the ordinary State of the World, fall always in a competent Degree to the Share of any good Men, who with tolerable Prudence and Diligence apply themselves to

SERM. the Acquisition of Them; and would fall

III. still more remarkably to their Share, under

such a good Constitution of Society, as human Wisdom might easily effect: So that with respect to any Good which may be in these Things, when all Particulars are justly stated, Providence may, perhaps, be said to have favoured the Men of Piety and Goodness, rather than Those of a contrary Character. But allowing that the Design of Providence, or the original Tendency of Things does not always take Effect in this Case; but that the Wicked are often possessed of much higher Degrees of Riches, Rank, and Power in the World, than their more deserving Neighbours, which is indeed Fact, yet still *a Man's Life consisteth* not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth; so far from it, that Life is usually enjoyed to the greatest Advantage by Those of a moderate Fortune and Condition; and large Possessions, without a Disposition to improve them well, are only great Snares and Curses to a Man, which draw him into a deeper Guilt, and plunge him more irretrievably in Misery. And if a vicious Man cannot derive Happiness from his outward Possessions; it is certain that all the inward Sources of it are quite cut off from him,

Luke xii.
15.

him, and a Fountain of the blackest Woe to SERM.
him is opened in his own Breast: Instead III.

of that perpetual Spring of the most pure
Joy and Peace which every good Man finds
in himself, the Wicked has within him,
what the Prophet compares to the troubled Iſa. lvii.
Sea, casting up Mire and Dirt; a Tumult 20.

of disorderly Passions, distracting and tormenting him; and in any Moments of Reflection, self-condemning Thoughts, Consciousness of Ill-desert, dark Suspicions, and dreadful Apprehensions of the impending Vengeance of a superior Power; which must necessarily throw him into as great Misery, as it is possible to conceive any to endure upon Earth. It is, therefore, a most false and unjust Impeachment of Providence, to say, that the Happiness of bad Men, is greater than that of the Good, in this World: On the Contrary, it is apparent, that when the respective Enjoyments of the Persons of these opposite Characters are fairly computed, the Ballance must be almost always vastly on the Side of the Righteous, and that the Governor of the World has provided a noble Remuneration for Virtue here, as well as a most glorious and eternal Reward for it hereafter.

SERM. 3. We may here clearly see how vain
III. and groundless all those Prejudices are,
which either the Adversaries of Religion in
general, or any Others conceive against the
Practice of Piety and Virtue, as being a
Thing burthensome to human Nature, and
inconsistent with the true Pleasure and En-
joyment of Life. This is a Notion which
many entertain of a strictly religious and
virtuous Life, and which never fails to give
them a great Distaste to That, which ap-
pears so frightful and disagreeable. Se-
veral, it is to be feared, gladly take up,
and cherish this Apprehension, only that
They may render Themselves more Easy
in their Wickedness, and have Something
to say in Excuse of it. And Others, may,
possibly, be deceived into it, from a mis-
taken Interpretation of some Passages of
Scripture, and the injudicious Representa-
tions which have too often been made of
Religion, as if it was a perpetual Conflict
with Nature, and a Constraint on our most
prevailing Desires and Affections; or, per-
haps, from the indiscreet Zeal and affected
Austerities of some Professors of Religion,
from whose Conduct and Management of
Themselves, under a Pretence of Piety, if
one were to judge of the true Genius of
Religion,

Religion, he must indeed conclude it to be **SERM.**
destructive of many of our most innocent **III.**

Enjoyments, and intended for a Punishment to Mankind. But whencesoever this disadvantageous Opinion of a pious and virtuous Course may take its Rise, it is certainly false, and very injurious to God, who has been so far from putting a Force upon our Nature, and restraining us from any thing that really tends to our Good, by the Laws which he has given us, that, on the Contrary, the Observation of these Laws is the noblest Improvement, and most delightful Exercise of our natural Powers and Affections, and the only sure and effectual Means of promoting our highest Happiness. The Truth is, it is Vice which is altogether unnatural, and ruinous to all our most valuable Interests; which spoils the native Beauty and subverts the Order of the Soul, which forces us upon the vilest Drudgeries, and involves us in the most deplorable Misery. And it is the Practice of Religion and Virtue alone, which can restore us to our original Dignity and Freedom, and lay the Foundation of our perfect Happiness. And before this can be found fault with, as lying heavy upon human Nature, and abridging our Pleasures, it

SERM. must always be misrepresented, or viewed
 III. in a wrong Light: To all who apprehend
 it rightly, it must appear the most natural
 and agreeable Thing in the World.

4. From what has been discoursed, we may see the strong Foundation which is laid for our practising all Virtue. To engage us to This, both Conscience, and Interest; our natural Sense of Duty, and our Desire of Happiness, conspire. The Dictates of our Consciences concerning the moral Good or Evil of our Conduct, lay the firmest Obligation upon us to abstain from Vice, and to abound in all Goodness: But supposing the Principle of Conscience to have lost its Authority and Power over us, and that we are so far degenerated, as not to be capable of discerning, in any lively Manner, the Beauties of Holiness, and of being warmed with the Love of Virtue; yet, so long as we love Ourselves, and feel a Concern for our own Welfare, which all will acknowledge they do, it may be expected, that we will have the utmost Dread of Vice, the certain Source of Ruin and Misery, and fly from it, as we would from a deadly Plague, or an enraged Monster ready to devour us; and that we will use all Methods in our Power, for recovering
 Ourselves

Ourselfes from our Corruptions, and at- SERM.
taining to a State of Piety and Righteous- III.

ness, which is the only possible Means of Happiness. If, notwithstanding the necessary Dependence which our Happiness has upon the Practice of Virtue, we still neglect this, and indulge Ourselfes in Habits of Wickedness, we shall discover a most thoroughly depraved and infatuated Temper, which is lost, both to all Sense of Ingenuity, and all rational Regard for our most obvious Interest. If we act even with any Degree of Prudence, we shall keep far away from the destructive Paths of Vice, and enter upon the Ways of Righteousness, in which Freedom, and Safety, and Satisfaction of all Sorts, are to be found. And to This, certainly, all of us will be easily induced, who have any Generosity and Nobleness of Soul, or any Gratitude towards God, for connecting our Duty and Interest; or contriving Things so, as that in performing the Service which he requires from us, we should find our true Good and Happiness.

S E R M O N

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S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

The Folly of Denying, or of Wishing against, the Existence of the Deity.

P S A L M XIV. I.

The Fool hath said in his Heart, there is no God.

SERM.
IV. **T**HE Thing which the Psalmist here brands with the Name of Folly, may be either the Judgment of a Man's Mind, or the Wish of his Heart, against the Existence of a Deity: He seems, indeed, to have the Latter more particularly in his View, as it is the Sentence of the Heart which he speaks of, rather than of the Understanding. It is certain, that Both may be most justly termed Folly or Madness, though of the Two, the Latter is the more gross and unnatural Infatuation. In treating of this Subject, I shall consider the monstrous Folly, I. Of denying the Existence

Existence of God. II. Of wishing that SERM.
there were no God: And afterwards make IV.
some Use and Application of what is dis-
coursed.

I. As to the Folly of denying the Existence of God: The Evidences of the Existence of a Deity, or of a Being infinitely wise, powerful, good, and holy, the Maker, Preserver, and Governor of all Things; the Evidences, I say, of the Existence of such a Being, are so various and numerous, that they must necessarily strike and satisfy the Minds of all, who make any proper Use of their rational Faculties. Wherever we fix our Attention, we meet with the clearest Characters and Impressions of the Divinity: Every Thing in the Universe, without us, and within us, attests and proves *his eternal Power, and Godhead.* It Rom. i.
is plain that all the Beings that we are ac-^{20.}
quainted with in this World, are so imperfect and dependent, that they are utterly insufficient for their own Production and Sustainance; they must, therefore, owe their Existence, and Preservation, to some superior Efficient, who is himself unoriginated and independent, who has formed, disposed, and ordered them in such a Manner, that they loudly proclaim the Perfections
of

SERM. of their great Author. It would be endless

IV. to instance in all Particulars within our
Observation, which evince the amazing Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and other Excellencies of him, who made, upholds, and governs all Things. In general, the vast Extent of the Universe, the Magnitude, Variety, and Stability of the heavenly Bodies, the Swiftneſs and Conſtancy of their Motions, their Beauty, Order, Harmony, and Relation to one another; the Composition of this Earth, every Way furniſhed and accommodated to be the Habitation of innumerable Systems of ſenſitive Natures, and of Man, its principal and moſt noble Inhabitant; the Vegetation and Growth of Plants; the Generation, Nutrition, and various Inſtincts of Animals; the Structure of their Bodies, ſo diverſified, and yet ſo admirably contrived for the greateſt Uſe of the ſeveral Tribes, or Species of them; the Formation of the human Body, with the moſt ſurprizing Apparatus in it for ſerving the Ends of Life; and above all, the Fabrick of our Minds, our Powers of Perception, Judgment, Reason, Reflection, and Liberty; our Senſe of Beauty, Order, Harmony, Proportion; our Conſcience of moral Good and Evil, our Approbation and
Love

Love of the One, and our Dislike and Hatred of the Other: These Things are such clear and incontestable Proofs of the infinite Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Goodness, Righteousness, and Sanctity, of the Original, Creating, Governing Mind, that the Man must be stupidly inadvertent, or obstinately prejudiced, on whom they do not make a deep Impression. Accordingly, it appears in fact, that the Generality of Mankind, have been ever ready to infer the Existence and Perfections of the Deity, from the most common and obvious Appearances in the Universe, and that the Few who have seemed either incredulous, or sceptical, as to these Points, have been such, who made but little or no Use of their reasonable Powers, or perverted and abused them, to cast a Mist over the most evident Truths, by Subtilties, and strained Suppositions, which could never enter into any plain honest Understanding, and upon which, none of a sound Judgment will ever lay any Weight. How, in Truth, can any who reason upon the Being of a God, in the Manner in which they reason in other analogous Cases, ever fail to submit to the Evidences of his Existence? Who that upon seeing some grand Building, and

SERM.

IV.

the

SERM. the Elegance, Proportion, and Convenience

IV.  of all its Parts, immediately infers a Builder, and his great Ability and Skill as an Architect; will not, upon the Contemplation of the Universe, and the wondrous Beauty, Order, and Contrivance of it, discern an omnipotent Intelligence, who planned and reared the mighty Fabrick? Who that from a prudent and just Oeconomy in a Family, from a constant Care to provide for its Necessities, and proper Rules laid down for the orderly Behaviour of its several Members, concludes that there must be some wise and good Father, or Head of it; or, that from the good Constitution of a Society, from excellent Laws taking place in it, for the Protection and Encouragement of Honesty and Virtue, and the Restraint and Discouragement of Iniquity and Vice, and an equitable and impartial Administration of all publick Affairs, assures himself of a righteous Magistracy, presiding and governing in it; who, I say, that draws these Inferences, which are very just, can help concluding, from the Provision which is made for the Happiness of all sensitive Creatures, from the Abilities with which Men are furnished, for rendering themselves, and one another, happy; from their
social

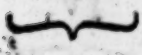
social Connexions, from the Power of Con-
science, and the Law of Virtue which we
are naturally under, that there is a universal
Parent of Nature, a most indulgent and
gracious Father of the human Kind, a
righteous and holy Governor of moral
Agents ? He who can easily account for the
ordinary Effects of human Power and Art,
by resolving them into their proper Causes,
and yet refuses to ascribe the most surprizing
Appearances of Nature to the Agency of a
Divine Mind, the only adequate Cause of
them, either falls far short of his usual Ca-
pacity and Penetration in judging of this
most important Article, or rather is defec-
tive in that Honesty and Impartiality of
Temper, which it highly becomes us to
carry along with us in all our Researches
and Inquiries, and is, in every Case, a ne-
cessary Qualification for our attaining to the
Knowledge of the Truth. If indeed the
Notions which are so apt to arise in us, of
Power, Design, Wisdom, Goodness, and
the like, in the Constitution, and Govern-
ment of the Universe, were only the rash
Imaginations of our Childhood, and un-
thinking Age ; if, upon a better Acquain-
tance with Nature, we saw but little Rea-
son for admiring its Contrivance and Order,

SERM.

IV.

H

we

SERM. we might then justly make but little account of the Argument arising from thence
 IV.  for the Divine Existence. But as the Contrary is well known to be the Case; as the farther we go in our Inquiries into the Constitution of Nature, particularly of the animal and rational Parts of it, we meet with still clearer and stronger Convictions of a perfectly wise, powerful, good, and righteous Author and Governor of it, and have indeed Ground to think that the Proofs of his Existence, are endless and inexhaustible; that any pretending to Understanding and Knowledge, after all this, should seem to be either altogether sceptical, or undetermined in their Opinion, as to the Cause and Origin of Things; or persuaded that the Universe has existed from all Eternity, and that the Changes which happen in it, are produced only by a brutal Force, or Necessity of Nature, void of all Counsel, Design, and Goodness; or that all Things came into the State in which they are, and still subsist by mere Chance, or Accident, is the absurdest and most unreasonable Thing that can be. Such Persons, *professing themselves to be wise, become eminently Fools.* For, *surely, vain are all Men by Nature,* according to the Reasoning of the Author of the

Rom. i.
22.

Book

Book of *Wisdom*, who are ignorant of God, SERM.
 and cannot out of the good Things that are IV.
 seen, know him that is; neither by consider- Wisdom
 ing the Works, acknowledge the Workmaster; xiii. 1—5.
 who being delighted with the Beauty of the
 Fire, or Wind, or Air, or Water, or the
 Circle of the Stars, and the Lights of Hea-
 ven, yet know not how much better the Lord
 of them is, and that the first Author of
 Beauty hath created them; and who being
 astonished at their Power and Virtue, yet
 understand not how much mightier is he that
 made them: For by the Greatness and Beau-
 ty of the Creatures, proportionably the Ma-
 ker of them is seen.

II. As to the Folly of Wishing that there
 were no God. The denying the Existence
 of God, is, certainly, the Height of Absur-
 dity and Madness, as it is a plain Contra-
 diction to all the Sense and Reason of Man-
 kind; but after all, if it could be supposed
 to proceed only from a Defect of a Man's
 Understanding, which however can hardly
 at any time be the Case, it would be a com-
 passionable and pardonable Folly: But to
 wish that there were no God, if a Man has
 any true Notion of his Nature, is the most
 unnatural and monstrous Infatuation, and

SERM. discovers the most perverse and inexcusable
IV. Turn of Mind that can be.

It is but a small Part of the Evil of this Temper, that it implies strong Prejudice, and a want of that Candour and Ingenuity, which is so highly becoming reasonable Beings in the Exercise of their intelligent Powers: The Wishing against the Existence of a Deity, presupposes Principles of the most malignant Influence, and the most unfriendly to Mankind, and which can take place only in a Mind which is utterly lost to Integrity, Benevolence, and Generosity, and even to a rational Sense of its own Interest, or Happiness.

For making this appear, let us consider, that as it was God that brought the Universe into Being, so it is his constant Energy which alone supports and enlivens it, without which, all Nature must immediately dissolve and vanish: To wish, therefore, that there were no God, is, in Effect, to desire the Destruction of the Universe, the Annihilation of all rational and perceptive Beings, the utter Extinction, not only of all future Hopes, but of all present Enjoyments. But let us suppose, according to the Atheistick Pretences, though the Thing is certainly impossible, that the Universe could

could subsist, and Things could go on, just SERM.
as we find they do, in the natural World, IV.
without a Deity and a Providence; yet, {
how in this Case, would the Happiness,
either of human Society, or of particular
Persons be provided for? As for the Hap-
piness of Society; whoever knows any
Thing of it, must be sensible that it de-
pends chiefly upon the Virtue and Inte-
grity of the several Members, who consti-
tute and compose the Society, from the At-
tention of all to the common Good, and
every one's performing faithfully the Du-
ties of his Rank and Station for the Ad-
vancement of it: This is indeed the Strength
and Life of the political Body, and the
only Thing which can ever make it flourish
and prosper. Now upon what Foundation
would the Cause of Virtue stand, if depriv-
ed of the Support and Aid, which it de-
rives from the Belief of a Deity? It is very
plain, that we have the Notions of moral
Good, and Evil, and approve the One, and
dislike the Other, previously to our Con-
ceptions of the Deity, and that we are de-
termined and led to the Practice of Virtue,
by our natural Instincts and Propensions,
abstracting from the Consideration of its
being positively required by the supreme

SERM. Lawgiver: And without all Question, the

IV. common Approbations, Instincts, and Affections of Humanity, will be always effectual for producing some Acts of Virtue, and in Consequence of these, some small Degree of publick Good among Men, whatever their speculative Notions, or Opinions are. But after this is allowed, it must also be allowed, if we will not contradict all the Experience of the World, that our natural Approbation and Love of Virtue, are usually so low, that without a constant Care to cultivate and strengthen them, they will soon be borne down by the inferior Principles in our Nature, and never engage us to such virtuous Actions, as are necessary for producing any great Moment of publick Happiness. The Best frequently find their Relish of moral Excellence to flatten, and their good Affections to decay and languish; insomuch that if there was no Principle in their Minds to revive and enliven their Perceptions of Virtue, and to support and animate them in the Practice of it, they must be in great Danger of falling by Temptations, and would, in several Cases, be unavoidably overcome by them. And as for the Generality of Men, who are at no Pains to discipline and improve their
Minds,

Minds, but give way to the Impulses of SERM.
every Passion which arises in them, it is IV.
certain, that if they were left purely under
the Influence of their natural Sentiments
and Feelings, they would make no Pro-
gress in a Course of Virtue, but would sink
into a State of great Degeneracy and Cor-
ruption, going on from one Degree of
Wickedness to a higher, till they introduced
into the World a most dismal Scene of
Distraction and Confusion, and became in-
supportable to one another. It is, there-
fore, altogether necessary that the moral
Powers, and good Affections of human
Nature, should be diligently improved and
strengthened, for rendering them effectual
and steady Principles of Virtue and publick
Happiness. And if we consider how this
is to be done, it seems very plain, that the
only Means of doing it, is by fixing in the
Minds of Men, a firm Persuasion of a per-
fectly wise, powerful, good, and righteous
Governor of the World, and impressing
them with a deep Reverence, Love, and
Fear of Him. These Principles are so
much of a Kind with our natural Sense of
moral Good and Evil, and so perfectly har-
monious with it, that if they take a tho-
rough Possession of the Mind, they will

SERM. necessarily assist this Sense, and strongly
IV. co-operate with it; will easily awaken and
quicken it, where it begins to droop or
languish; and restore and re-establish it, if
any thing at all will do so, where it has
been almost extinguished or lost; and add
such Force and Weight to the social and
generous Propensions of our Nature, as will
make them operate very powerfully for the
good Conduct of Life, and the producing
a great deal of Order, Peace, and Happi-
ness in the World. And these, indeed,
are the only Principles, which can govern
and influence the Minds of Men, so as to
engage them in the uniform Practice of
Virtue, and attach them firmly to the In-
terest of Society. If any one should pre-
tend, as some have done, that the Want of
these Principles may be supplied, and that
the Purposes, for which they are alledged
to be necessary, may be sufficiently served,
by the Authority of the Magistrate and hu-
man Laws, and the fear of those Punish-
ments which Civil Society inflicts, he would,
certainly, discover but very little Insight in-
to the Constitution of human Nature. For
is it not very plain, that many of the most
important Springs of Action within us,
which have often the greatest Effect on the
Affairs

Affairs of the World, lie quite out of the **SERM.**
Reach of the highest Authority and Power **IV.**
of Men; and that many, who are most in-
jurious to Society, can, either conceal their
Crimes from the Notice of the Magistrate,
or, if they are discovered, elude his Cor-
rection, by some of the various Arts of
Fraud, or by their great Might and Power?
So that after all the Assistance which Civil
Magistracy and Laws afford to Society, if
Mankind were without all Apprehensions
of a superior Power, and higher Govern-
ment, to which they owed Subjection, the
publick Happiness would, undoubtedly,
stand upon a most precarious Foundation.
Indeed, in this Case, it would be hardly
possible for any Government to subsist, and
to maintain any tolerable Appearance of a
social State, as Vice would soon become so
outrageous and impudent, as to bid an
open Defiance to Authority, to subvert all
Order, and to throw Men into such a State
of constant Jealousy, Distrust, and Fear of
one another, as would make, at least, the
weaker and more defenceless Part of them,
rather than to continue in such a Commu-
nity, to fly to any separate Habitations,
which they might have, in the wild Dens,
or lonely Desarts of the Earth.

Thus

SERM. necessarily assist this Sense, and strongly
IV. co-operate with it; will easily awaken and
quicken it, where it begins to droop or
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generous Propensions of our Nature, as will
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Affairs of the World, lie quite out of the **SERM.**
Reach of the highest Authority and Power **IV.**

of Men; and that many, who are most injurious to Society, can, either conceal their Crimes from the Notice of the Magistrate, or, if they are discovered, elude his Correction, by some of the various Arts of Fraud, or by their great Might and Power? So that after all the Assistance which Civil Magistracy and Laws afford to Society, if Mankind were without all Apprehensions of a superior Power, and higher Government, to which they owed Subjection, the publick Happiness would, undoubtedly, stand upon a most precarious Foundation. Indeed, in this Case, it would be hardly possible for any Government to subsist, and to maintain any tolerable Appearance of a social State, as Vice would soon become so outrageous and impudent, as to bid an open Defiance to Authority, to subvert all Order, and to throw Men into such a State of constant Jealousy, Distrust, and Fear of one another, as would make, at least, the weaker and more defenceless Part of them, rather than to continue in such a Community, to fly to any separate Habitations, which they might have, in the wild Dens, or lonely Desarts of the Earth.

Thus

SERM.

IV. Thus we see, what Dependance the Happiness of Society hath upon the Faith of a Deity. If we now proceed to consider what Connexion the Happiness of particular Persons hath with this same Principle; it is evident, that as Virtue is the great Source of private, as well as publick Happiness, affording Men the purest and most satisfying, the most substantial and durable Joys and Delights, of which they have any Experience, that the Belief of a God, which is the great Security for our persevering and proceeding in a virtuous Course, must be of as great Moment to the Happiness of every Individual, as it is to the Welfare of Society in General. But besides this, it is to be considered, that Men, in their single Capacities, are liable to many Evils and Dangers, from which no Virtue or Prudence upon Earth can deliver them; and are desirous of many Blessings, which are quite out of their own, and all human Power; and for which they must entirely depend upon the Protection and Favour of a superior Being, who is both able and willing to relieve and assist them. The Evils incident to Men in this Life, which often are neither to be prevented, or remedied by them, are various, and well known; such

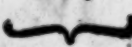
such as Pain and Sickness of Body, Anxiety of Mind, the Loss of Friends, the Distress or Ruin of publick Affairs, Reproach, Persecution, and the like. Now what should become of us, when exposed to these Sufferings, if we had no Confidence in a supreme Protector and Governor? We might have a strong Sense of our Innocence and Integrity; and that would, indeed, free us from the most intolerable Misery of Self-condemnation, and afford us as much Happiness, as our Circumstances would admit of: But still we should find a Load and Burthen sinking and oppressing us, that was not to be thrown off. Death is an Event, which is, certainly, before all of us: But what Support and Consolation could we find against the Apprehension of it, and the Wreck and Dissolution of our Nature by it, if we had no Dependence on the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of our Maker, for carrying us through the Shock, and raising us up in another State? The Consciousness of the highest Virtue would be far from relieving us in this Case: It is plain, that the more we possessed of that inestimable Treasure, the more dreadful would the Thoughts of losing it for ever be to us, and the more should we regret our wretched Fate.

SERM.
IV.

SERM. Fate. Indeed the Atheistick Scheme sours

IV. and poisons the Cup of Mortals, making it impossible to them, if they have any Reflection, to enjoy any solid or stable Tranquillity in their most prosperous Days; depriving them of their most natural Relief and Refuge in Adversity; and filling them at last with Horror and Despair, at the Thoughts, either of utter Extinction; or, some inconvenient, or unhappy Existence which may fall to them, in the infinite Hurries and Changes of Chance, or, into which they may be thrown by the irresistible Force of an undesigning Fatality.

Upon the Whole, it is sufficiently evident, that the Belief of a Deity is a Point of the highest Importance to the Happiness, both of human Society in general, and of every particular Man. Who then that duly considers This, and has any of the common Affections and Feelings of Humanity in him; who has, either any Generosity of Mind and good Wishes for his Kind, or any Desire of his own truest and most extensive Happiness, will ever suffer Prejudices to arise and grow in him against the Existence of a Deity? Who, indeed, that is not abandoned to all Goodness, and lost all Hopes of the Rewards of

it; who, that is not conscious of an ex-SERM.
treme Baseness and Depravity, and being IV.
odious to himself, concludes of course, 
that he must still be more odious to him,
who *is of purer Eyes than to behold Ini-* Hab. i.
quity, can rejoice in the Notion of a Fa-^{13.}
therless World, that the Universe is with-
out a Head and Governor, that no Traces
of Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness,
are to be found in the Constitution of Na-
ture, and the Administration of human
Affairs; but that all Things come to pass
by Chance, or are in the Hands of a blind
invincible Necessity. Surely, if a wise and
good Man happened to hesitate about the
Existence of God, yet from a Sense which
he must have of the great Utility of the
Notion of a Deity, and its vast Importance
to the Welfare of the World, and the Com-
fort of Men's Minds, he would be so far
from cherishing a Temper of Incredulity
in himself, that he would be, above all
Things, solicitous to obtain a Stronger Con-
viction of this Point, and esteem it as the
greatest Felicity to be able to satisfy him-
self, and all Mankind, that such a Being
existed as we apprehend the Deity to be;
that the Universe is not a fortuitous Jumble,
or an Aggregate of Things, without any
Coherence,

SERM. Coherence, Meaning, or Design; but that

IV. it was at first formed, and is still governed
by infinite Power, directed by infinite Knowledge, Justice, and Goodness. Nay, even bad Men, Those who are most conscious of deserving Ill at the Hands of God, if they act with any Share of common Sense, or Prudence, instead of seeking Shelter for Themselves, in vain Prejudices, and impotent Desires against his Existence, will rather hearken willingly to the Evidences of his Being, and endeavour to find Protection in his Mercy, which, how unworthy soever they may have been, will certainly be extended to Them, upon their unfeigned Submission and Repentance. The Wishing, therefore, that there were no God, is plainly the greatest Stupidity and Sottishness, and can never enter into any Heart, which is not totally perverted, and lost, not only to all the generous Sentiments and Passions of Men, but even to a true Notion of private Interest, or Happiness.

The Application of what has been Discourfed, shall be made, 1. With respect to Those, who either deny, or doubt the Existence of a Deity; 2. With respect to Ourselves,

Ourselves, who profess to be persuaded of it. SERM.
IV.

1. With respect to Those, who deny, or doubt the Existence of God. Such Persons should consider, that the Atheistick Opinion is so contrary to the Appearances of the Universe, and to the natural Presumptions of Men's Minds, upon any attentive View of these Appearances, that there may be Reason to suspect that it is rash and ill founded; and that it is plainly so full of Horror and Mischief, spreading a most melancholy Gloom over the World, undermining the main Props and Supports of Society, Robbing Men of all solid Enjoyment in Life, and leaving them without Comfort and Hope in Death, that there is, at least, great Reason to desire that it may be a Mistake, and that it would be a great Happiness to be convinced that it really is so. In Consequence of this Sense of Things, such Men should be always of a candid and docile Disposition, ready to review their Notions, and to examine with Calmness and Impartiality any Arguments which are offered for the Existence of a Deity; to treat the Subject, not in the way of Scoffing and Buffoonry, but with a Gravity and Seriousness, proportioned to its

SERM. its great Weight and Importance. This is
IV. what may be justly expected of all who
pretend to deny, or call in question, the
Being of a God, and would be considered
as Men who reflect and reason fairly upon
the Argument. If any, after all, should
remain incredulous, or doubtful, as to the
Existence of a Deity, they may hold their
uncomfortable Opinion with more Ease,
when they know that they have not fallen
into it, through any Negligence or Fault
of their own. But the Truth is, it is not
to be apprehended, that any Person pos-
sessed of the ordinary Abilities of Mankind,
and who with Simplicity and Honesty, en-
quires into the Evidences of the Divine
Existence, will either disbelieve it, or
have any considerable Doubts about it in
his Mind. The very Notion of a Deity
falls in so naturally with the strongest De-
sires of an honest Heart, and the Notices
which God has actually given of himself to
the World, are so clear, so numerous, and
so full, that there probably have never
been any, who diligently and earnestly
searched after him, who did not, in the
Conclusion, find him out. Let Those,
therefore, who alledge great Difficulties
and Objections against the Belief of a Deity,
according

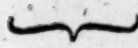
according to an Advice long since given to SERM.
Persons of their Characters, purify their IV.
Hearts from all atheistical and immoral De-
sires and Affections, and take along with
them, in their Disquisitions upon this Sub-
ject, the Qualifications which the Light of
their Consciences, and Reason of their own
Minds must recommend to Them; and
the Consequence will be, that their Under-
standings will soon be illuminated with the
Knowledge of the Divinity, and their
Doubts of his Existence removed.

2. With respect to Ourselves, who are
persuaded of the Existence of the Deity.
Let us take care to establish our Minds
still farther, in the Belief of this funda-
mental Point, either by new Arguments,
which will readily occur to every attentive
and inquisitive Man, or by a Review of
the old Ones which have already convinced
us of its Truth. And having settled our
Faith of it, upon a firm Foundation, let
us not be shaken or moved, by any bold
Jests, or vain Subtilties of witty and pro-
fane Adversaries. If any thing should be
offered, that has the Appearance of fair
Argumentation against the Being of a God,
it ought, indeed to be considered and an-
swered. But as for the Suggestions of Men
I against

SERM. against it, who have not the Discovery of
 IV. the Truth in View, who mean only to divert themselves in a Matter too serious to be Jested with, or to give Vent to the Spleen and Prejudice of a malevolent Heart, at the Thoughts of Order and Government in the Universe, they may be deservedly treated with utter Neglect and Contempt. Above all, let us take care that our Belief of a Deity be a lively practical Principle, both influencing us in those Duties of an honest Conversation towards Mankind, which we must know to be agreeable to the Will of our Maker and Governor, and producing in us the Affections which terminate in God himself, and which move and exert themselves upon a simple View of his most lovely Perfections; such as Reverence, Love, Gratitude, Joy, Trust, Dependence, and Resignation. And let no one think, that these Affections, or the natural Expressions of them, in Acts of Adoration, Praise, Thanksgiving, and Prayer, can be ever excusably wanting in any who acknowledge a Deity. It is indeed hard to conceive, how the Absence of Them can consist with a firm Belief in God at all; most certainly, it can never consist with any fixed Attention to him, and any strong Sense
 of

of his Perfections. In a Mind habitually SERM.
attentive to the Deity, and penetrated, or IV.
deeply impressed with a Sense of his perfect Wisdom, Power, Purity, Justice, and Goodness, a Temper of Piety and Devotion must as necessarily arise, as the Affections which we exercise towards our fellow Creatures, or any of the private Desires of our Nature arise and move in us, upon the Presence of their respective Objects. The Relation, or Correspondence between the Affections of Piety, and a lively Perception of the Divine Perfections, is plainly as real, and as much fixed in Nature, as That between any of our lower Appetites and Senses, and the immediate Influence of their Objects upon us, is. As we would not, therefore, notwithstanding our professing in Words to believe and acknowledge a God, be thought in Truth to deny him; as we would not, at least, have our Belief of him, to be only a cold and lifeless Assent of the Understanding, which is good for nothing; it concerns us, to raise and animate, by serious Reflection and Meditation, our Persuasion of his Existence, so as to render it an effectual Principle, first of a rational Devotion, and after that, of all the other Branches of Virtue in us.

SERM. And this is a Point, which may with the

IV.  greater Reason be urged and insisted upon, as there are at present several Persons, who pretend to be convinced of the Being of a God, who yet seem to have no Notion of any Homage which is due immediately to him from his intelligent Creatures; who probably think it a mean Superstition to cultivate an inward Temper of Devotion towards him, and to express it in any external Acts of religious Worship. In reality, upon whatever Foundation such Men may call Themselves Believers of a Deity, it is not to be imagined that they can ever have a just and lively Faith in the true God of the Universe, a Being infinite in Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness, who is both the natural and moral Governor of Mankind: If indeed they had such a Faith, one may venture to say that it is impossible, while they continue the Beings that they are, that they should not with the highest Veneration, Esteem, and Love, contemplate the Character of the Deity; that they should not be full of a Sense of his Excellence and Goodness, and abound in all becoming Expressions of Praise and Gratitude towards him, of Trust, Confidence, and joyful Hope in him, and of Submission
and

and Resignation to him; as well as endeavour to imitate his Purity, Justice, and Mercy, in their Behaviour among Men. SERM. IV.
Whoever, therefore, say that they *believe in God*, should justify their Faith in him, by *glorifying him as God*, both with the sincere Homage of their Hearts, and the Integrity and Purity of their outward Conversation. To Him be all Glory, both now, and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N V.

The Sanctity and moral Government of God.

H A B. I. 13.

*Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil,
and canst not look on Iniquity.*

SERM. V. **T**HE Appearances of Power, Design, and Wisdom, are so very clear and visible in the Constitution of the World, that almost All who consider it with any Attention, acknowledge it to be the Work of an almighty intelligent Agent. So far several Persons, who are averse enough to the Notion of any superior Nature in the Universe, advance in the Principles of *Theism*, merely by the Force of an Evidence, which is not to be contradicted, or evaded by them. And such Men can the more easily reconcile themselves to the Belief of Power, Activity, and Intelligence in the Origin and Cause

Cause of Things, as they apprehend that SERM.
these Properties imply no moral Dominion V.
or Government over Mankind, that they
do not determine the Being who possesses
them, either to approve, or disapprove of
one sort of Affections, or one certain Te-
nor of Conduct, more than of their Con-
traries, but leave him quite indifferent to
what is called Virtue and Vice among Men;
so that all Notions of deserving well or ill
at his Hands, and all Expectations of Re-
wards, or Punishments from him, in Con-
sequence of our Behaviour, are altogether
vain and delusive.

And indeed if we conceived the Deity to
be only a powerful intelligent Being, with-
out any moral Qualities and Perfections, let
his natural Power and Understanding be
supposed ever so independent and infinite,
it is certain that his Character would be
but very little interesting to us. We might
easily see that such a Being could make us
happy, or miserable, as he thought fit; but
as we supposed him to be, void of all Sanc-
tity, Righteousness, and moral Goodness;
that there was no Principle in him which
could move him to regard our Temper and
Behaviour, or make him either pleased, or
displeased with our Conduct, in whatever

SERM. Way we ordered it, we should think ourselves to be no way concerned with him, and never act either from the Love, or Fear of him at all. The natural Attributes of God are absolutely necessary to the Perfection of his Nature, to his being an Agent, to his Creating and Governing the World at all; but taken alone, they are far from finishing his Character: What compleats his Glory, and exhibits him to us as the most perfect Agent, and renders him, in the most affecting Sense our Governor, is his possessing, in Conjunction with the highest Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge, all moral Excellencies, and particularly a perfect *Sanctity* or *Holiness* of Nature, which sets him at the greatest Distance from all moral Evil, which makes him necessarily to approve of Virtue, and adhere to it in his own Conduct and Administration, and likewise to approve and love it in his rational Creatures, and to disapprove and hate the Contrary in them. It is plain, that if this Property belongs to God, as it must greatly heighten our Idea of his Excellence, so it naturally points him out as the Governor of Mankind, considered as rational and moral Agents; as a Being, who will certainly observe and animadvert upon our Temper
and

and Conduct, who will be pleased with SERM.
our Goodness, and offended with our V.
Wickedness, and make us most sensibly
feel the Effects of his Approbation, or Con-
demnation. Now as it must be a Matter
of the greatest Consequence to be convinced
that this Perfection of *Sanctity*, including
a Discernment, Approbation, and Love of
Virtue, and a Perception, Dislike, and Ha-
tred of Vice, really belongs to the Divine
Nature, I shall, in the remaining Part of
this Discourse, First, Consider upon what
Grounds this Perfection is to be ascribed to
God; and afterwards make some important
Reflections, which will offer themselves to
us upon this Subject.

As for the Grounds or Reasons, upon
which this Perfection of Sanctity is to be
ascribed to the Deity: Some have thought
that the Holiness, Goodness, and all the
other moral Perfections of God, have a
necessary Connexion with his natural At-
tributes, and may be deduced from the Idea
of his Independency, almighty Power, and
infinite Knowledge; but as the Reasoning
which is commonly used upon this Argu-
ment, whatever Force there may be re-
ally in it, is by no Means clear and convin-
cing

SERM. cing to many who have considered it, I
V. shall not here enter into it, but endeavour
to prove the *Sanctity* of the Divine Nature, by some other Considerations more familiar and natural, and of more easy Comprehension to any plain attentive Mind.

As we are almost necessarily led to form our Ideas of the Powers and Perfections of all superior Natures, by some Resemblance, or Analogy, to what we esteem most excellent and perfect in Ourselves; let us, first, consider, whether there is any Thing in our own Constitution, which may be the Foundation of our ascribing the Perfection of Sanctity to the supreme Being. It is plain, that among several Powers and Principles implanted in our Minds, we have one which gives us the Ideas of Virtue and Merit, in certain Dispositions and Actions of rational Agents, and of Vice and Ill-desert, in others of them; which makes us to esteem and delight in the one sort, and to condemn and abhor the other. This is a Fact which seems to be as certain from our Consciousness and Experience, as that we have a bodily Eye to distinguish between Light and Darkness, or a Taste which furnishes us with the different Sensations of Sweet and Bitter. And when
we

we reflect upon this Faculty, and consider SERM.
its Use in our Constitution, we cannot but V.

conclude it to be the highest and most important one belonging to us, which most eminently distinguishes us from all the inferior Orders of Creatures in this World, which gives us a Notion of an intrinsic Dignity; or Worth in our Nature, and of our advanced Rank in the Scale of Existence and Perfection, and which, in Consequence of this, proves a Spring of such noble and stable Pleasures to us, as are infinitely preferable to all our other Enjoyments. Now as it is this Faculty, which so greatly exalts and felicitates our Nature, so it seems to be altogether necessary to the Perfection and Happiness of the higher Beings in the Universe, and even of the first and supreme Being himself. Without it, He might be supposed to be possessed of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, in infinite Degrees; and as these would make him to contrive and effect the greatest possible Happiness which he could communicate to his Creatures, he would certainly be an Object of high Approbation to us, and to all other Beings constituted with such a Power of discerning and esteeming moral Worth and Excellence, as we have. But to himself, he could be no Object of

3 Appro-

SERM. Approbation at all, as he would want the
V. Power of perceiving and relishing his own
Worth and Perfection; he would indeed enjoy the Pleasure which resulted immediately from the Exercise of his Goodness, but he could not reflect upon his Conduct with any Complacency, nor have a Consciousness of merited Esteem and Love, which yet, according to the best Apprehensions that we can have of the Matter, is the principal Source of Satisfaction and Enjoyment.

But besides this Reason for ascribing the Perfection of Sanctity to the Deity, from the Idea which we naturally form of his Dignity and Felicity, in Correspondence to what constitutes our own, his very giving us the Power of discerning moral Good and Evil, and of approving the One, and condemning the Other, is a clear Proof that he must have it, or something of a superior Nature, analogous to it, in himself. There is hardly any Maxim which the Mind more easily and firmly assents to than this, that whatever Excellency, or Perfection is in any Effect, the same must be still more eminently in its Cause. Since, therefore, the Deity has implanted in us this noble Faculty of moral Discernment, is it not
certain,

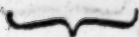
certain, that it, or some Principle corre-
sponding to it, however vastly more per-
fect, must be in his own Nature? If this

S E R M.

V.

were not the Case, might we not be said
to be more perfect than our Maker, to be
more compleatly furnished for attaining to
what we must take to be the best State of
intelligent Agents, than he is, from whom
our Beings, and all our Powers and Capa-
cities are derived? The Absurdity and Sot-
tishness of supposing the Author of Nature
to be defective in any Perfections which
he communicates to his Creatures, is justly
exposed and reproved by the Psalmist, *Un-
derstand ye brutish among the People, and ye
Fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted
the Ear, shall he not hear? He that formed
the Eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth
Man Knowledge, shall he not know?* It may,
perhaps, however be objected against this
Argument, that as there are several Powers
and Qualities, accounted Perfections and
Virtues in our Constitution, which are uni-
versally allowed to have no place in the
Deity, who implanted them in us, so it
cannot be inferred from our having a Sense
of moral Good and Evil given to us, that
therefore the same must be in our Creator.
But though we must not conclude from

Psalm
xciv.
8-10.

SERM. our having external Senses, bodily Appetites and Passions, and the like, that our
V.  Maker must have them also; because these Things, though necessary to the Purposes of this Life, and of great Use to us in the present infirm State of our Being, yet are really Arguments of our Imperfection, and therefore not, without the grossest Absurdity, to be attributed to the first and highest Being in the Universe, who has Powers in him, which most perfectly contain the Advantages of these lower Faculties belonging to us, and set him infinitely above the Want and Use of them; yet from our possessing those Things which are absolute Perfections, which not only serve the noblest Purposes which we are capable of in this Life, but are fit to go along with us into any higher Scenes for which we may be designed, and which seem to be worthy of the most excellent spiritual Natures, and are indeed the greatest Accomplishments that we can conceive any Beings to have, such as Intelligence, a Sense of Virtue and Vice, and a Disposition of Benevolence, we may very justly infer that our Creator has either these Perfections in Kind, though in an infinitely more exalted Degree in himself; or some Principles of a superior Nature,

ture, correspondent to them, which give SERM.
him the most perfect Knowledge of all V.
Things, the most lively Perceptions of the
Dignity and Loveliness of Virtue, and of
the Baseness and Deformity of Vice, and
the strongest and most fixed Determination
to promote the Happiness of the Universe.
This, I say, is a Conclusion, which we
may justly make, in virtue of the Principle
already mentioned, that every derived Per-
fection must be most eminently in the
Cause, or Source of it; and is besides ne-
cessary to be admitted, for our forming an
intelligible Notion of the Deity, and our
receiving any Assistance in the Exercise of
Virtue from the Belief of his Existence,
and the Contemplation of his Character
and Example.

Farther, it is plain that God is a holy
Being, that he has a Perception of moral
Good and Evil, and *loves Righteousness,*
and hates Iniquity, from his Conduct and
Administration of the Affairs of Mankind.
His giving us moral Powers and Faculties,
may, in a different View, from that in
which we considered it before, be men-
tioned as a Proof of his Regard to the Dif-
ference between Virtue and Vice, and his
approving the one, and disliking the other.

His

SERM. His fixing us in a Situation in the World,
V. which affords noble Opportunities to our
moral Powers of exerting Themselves, and
improving it to a great Degree of Perfection, and in which they must always operate in some Measure, is a farther Argument of the Purity and Holiness of his Nature. And more particularly, his establishing a Connexion between Virtue and Happiness, and between Vice and Misery; his even making Virtue as Virtue, and Vice as Vice, respectively the Causes of the greatest Good or Ill which happen to Men, clearly proves his Sanctity; that he knows the Dignity and Worth of Virtue, and the Baseness and ill Desert of Wickedness, and that he is the Friend and Patron of the One, and the Adversary and Avenger of the Other; that he has actually begun, and is exercising a righteous Government in his present Dispensations towards Mankind. That this is really the Case, that according to the natural Course and Tendency of Things, there is a Connexion between Virtue and Happiness, and between Vice and Misery, must be obvious to every Man of Reflection and Observation; and though it is certain, that this original Order established in Nature, is frequently broken and interrupted

rupted in some Measure, yet still it takes SERM.
effect so far, as to make the Condition of V.
the Righteous, beyond all Comparison, pre-
ferable to that of the Wicked, at least for
the most part, even in point of Interest, or
true Enjoyment; nay so far, as to give
good Men always the highest Pleasure
which they can have any Experience of,
from the Consciousness of their Integrity,
and the Joy, Peace, Hope, and Confidence
in God, which that inspires; from the
Protection and Assistance which their Vir-
tue usually procures them, even from the
Generality of the World, and the Congra-
tulation, Esteem, and Friendship, which it
certainly gains them from all the wiser and
better Part of Men; and so far, as to ex-
pose the Wicked, in many Instances at
least, to the most dreadful Misery which
Men can endure, from a simple View of
their own Depravity and Guilt, and the
Remorse, Anguish, Shame, and Terror,
which thereupon arise in their Minds;
from the Infamy of their Characters, and
the Resentment and Indignation, which
their Enormities draw upon Them, not
only from the Wise and Virtuous, but
from the greatest Part of Mankind. From
all which, though we cannot infer the

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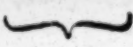
Perfection

SERM. Perfection of moral Government and distributive Justice in the present Conduct of human Affairs, yet we must at least discern such clear Characters of Sanctity, and such plain Beginnings, and such a general Plan of a righteous Government, in the Administration of them, as are sufficient to convince us that the Maker and Governor of the World, is by no means indifferent to Virtue and Vice, but that he knows the essential Difference between them, and countenances and supports the Cause of the One, and discourages and opposes that of the Other; that *the Eyes of the Lord*, as the *Pf. xxxiv.* *Pfalmist* speaks, *are upon the Righteous,* and *his Face is set against the Evil-Doer.* 15, 16.

These Considerations seem to have sufficient Evidence for satisfying all, who carefully and impartially attend to them, of the Sanctity of the Divine Nature, and have always had so much Force, as to make Mankind very generally agree in ascribing this Attribute or Property to the Deity. There have been, comparatively, but extremely Few, who have had any Notion at all of an original Supreme Being in the Universe, from whom all other Things are derived, who have not from the very Bent and Biass of their Nature, from the most obvious

obvious Suggestions of their Minds, upon SERM.
any serious Review of their own Powers V.
and Excellencies, concluded the first Cause
and Maker of all, to be perfectly holy and
righteous. This Conception of the Deity
is interwoven in all the Schemes, or Systems
of Religion, which any where obtain in the
World. It lies at the Bottom of all the
Worship and Service, which any Men ra-
tionally offer to God; it is pre-supposed,
even in those Superstitious Rites, which de-
luded Mortals make use of, for gaining his
Favour, or averting his Displeasure. The
Forms of Oaths, without which the great
Ends of Society could not be carried on,
contain either express or tacit Acknow-
ledgments of the Sanctity and Equity of the
Divine Administration: And indeed it is
plain, that if God was not believed to be a
holy and just Being, all Appeals, and all
Applications to him, in any Manner, or
Form whatsoever, would soon appear even
to the most Thoughtless, to be quite im-
pertinent and foolish. I shall conclude this
Part of the Discourse, with some Passages
of Scripture, containing clear Assertions,
and lively Illustrations of the perfect Ho-
liness and Righteousness of the Deity, to
the Truth of which, all unprejudiced

SERM. Minds, will, most probably, immediately
 V. assent. *The Lord, says Moses, is a God of
 Deut. Truth, and without Iniquity, Just and Right*
 xxxii. 4. *is he. Thou art of purer Eyes, says the
 Prophet in the Text, than to behold Evil,
 and can'st not look on Iniquity, without a
 Psalm. v. Dislike and Detestation of it. Thou art not*
 4, 5, 6. *a God, says the Psalmist, that hast Pleasure
 in Wickedness; neither shall Evil dwell with
 thee; The Foolish shall not stand in thy Sight,
 thou hatest all Workers of Iniquity; Thou
 shalt destroy them that speak Leasing: The
 Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful Man.*
 Psalm. xi. *The righteous Lord, says he, loveth Right-*
 7. *eousness, and his Countenance beholdeth the*
 Isa vi. *Upright. Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of*
 3. *Hosts, say the Angels in the Vision of Isaiah,*
the whole Earth is full of his Glory. I shall
only add the Representation which Elibu
gives of the Purity and Justice of the Su-
preme Lord and Governor of all Things,
for the Truth of which he appeals to the
inward Sense and Conviction of every rea-
sonable Man. Therefore hearken unto me,
 Job. *ye Men of Understanding; Far be it from*
 xxxiv. 10. *God, that he should do Wickedness, and from*
 11, 12. *the Almighty, that he should commit Ini-*
quity: For the Work of a Man shall be ren-
der unto him, and cause every Man to find
according

according to his Ways. Yea, surely, God SERM.
will not do wickedly, neither will the Al- V.
mighty pervert Judgment. 

I shall now proceed to some useful Reflections, which will naturally arise upon this Subject.

I. The perfect Sanctity of the Deity lays the justest Foundation for our highest Esteem, Reverence, and Adoration of him. We are so constituted, that we cannot but approve and admire moral Worth and Goodness wherever it appears: Even the limited Excellence which the Creatures are possessed of, commands a high Degree of our Respect and Veneration. The noble Sense of Virtue and Vice which prevails in many Men, and the Progress which they make in solid Goodness, never fail to make us exceedingly revere, and honour Them. The superior Dignity; the higher Attainments and Improvements of Beings of a more exalted Rank in the Creation, draw from us a proportionably larger Measure of Reverence and Praise. How then must our Minds be affected with the original transcendent Purity and Righteousness of the Creator himself, who has in his Nature the Standard of all Dignity and Worth, and the Spring of all Goodness; who has

SERM. implanted in the various Orders of intel-

V.  ligent Agents, all those Powers which make them capable of any real Excellence, and from whom all the Virtues and good Qualities which we so much admire and applaud in them, are ultimately derived? Surely, the Contemplation of this eternal Source of moral Beauty and Excellence, from whence every thing that is most becoming, lovely, conspicuous, and great in the Universe proceeds, must most wonderfully strike us, and inspire into us all possible Reverence, Honour, and Adoration of the Deity. It is indeed impossible, if we really believe the independent, immutable, and most eminent Holiness of God, and have withal any just or lively Sense of it in our Minds, not to be filled with the most respectful and honourable Sentiments and Affections towards him, and not to be disposed to give him the Glory and Praise which are due to him on that

Rev. xv. Account. *Great and marvellous are thy*
3. 4. *Works, Lord God Almighty, just and true*
are thy Ways, thou King of Saints: Who
shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy

Pf. xxx. *Name; for thou only art Holy. Sing unto*
4. *the Lord, O ye Saints of his, says the Psalmist, and give Thanks at the Remembrance*
of

of his Holiness. The Celebration of this SERM.
glorious Attribute of the Divinity, is a prin- I.
cipal Part of that Worship which is offered
to him, by the blessed Inhabitants of Hea-
ven, who, according to the Representation
which we have of them in the prophetical
Visions, *cease not, Day and Night, saying,* Rev. iv. 8.
holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who
was, and is, and art to come.

2. From the essential and immutable
Holiness of the Divine Nature, we may
evidently see the Vanity and Folly of all
that Superstition, which substitutes as the
Ground of Men's Acceptance with God,
any Thing different from the Practice of
moral Piety and Virtue. For this being
the only Thing that corresponds to the Pu-
rity of God, and the only Qualification
which he can have a Regard to in rational
Agents, whoever want this Qualification,
and yet endeavour to recommend them-
selves to his Favour, plainly attempt what
is quite impossible ; as much so, as if they
undertook to suspend a Mountain in the
Air, or to raise a great Building without a
solid Foundation. This, indeed, seems to
be so clear a Case, when the Holiness of the
Deity is once admitted, that none but very
inconsiderate Men, or Persons extremely

SERM. prejudiced, and willing to be deceived, can
V. lie under any Mistake about it.

3. From the Sanctity of the Divine Nature, there arises the strongest Presumption of future Rewards and Punishments. Because as this Property of the Deity implies his having a just Sense of the Loveliness and Merit of Virtue, and of the Turpitude and Ill-desert of Vice; and as it must necessarily interest him in Behalf of the one, and set him against the other, and make him fully declare his Sentiments of Men, according as they are morally Good, or Evil, in his Eyes; as in Consequence of this, he has actually marked out in the Constitution and Order of Nature, a Scheme of a righteous Government, which always takes Effect so far, as to shew us very plainly how he is affected and engaged with respect to Virtue and Vice, though by several Accidents it is hindered from attaining to its full Accomplishment and Perfection in this World; we may conclude that this same Attribute of God will prompt him to protect and support the Cause of Virtue, and to express his Enmity to Vice, still more remarkably in another State; that the Time will come, when *he will bring forth his Righteousness as the Light, and his Judgment*

ment as the Noon-day; when that pure and just Administration which is already visibly begun, and carried a considerable Length, shall be finished and compleated, and every Conscience shall see, and every Tongue confess its absolute Equity and Impartiality; when the accidental Obstacles to the natural Tendency and Operation of Virtue and Vice, arising only from the State of this World, being removed, these Qualities, under the immediate Direction and Government of the Deity, will uniformly exert their full Force and Influence on those in whom they inhere; the one making all the Good compleatly blessed, and raising them to a State of the highest Dignity and Glory, and the other involving the whole World of the Wicked in extreme Misery, and overwhelming them with utter Disgrace and Confusion.

4. The Consideration of the Holiness of God may be justly Matter of Terror to all impenitent Sinners, and make the best of us ashamed and humbled before him, from a Consciousness of our manifold Defects and Imperfections. As the Purity of God must necessarily raise in him a perfect Opposition and Aversion to all moral Defilement and Corruption; as it makes him to

bate

SERM. *hate all Workers of Iniquity, and to be*

V. *angry with the Wicked every Day; the*

Thoughts of it may, certainly, alarm and terrify all, who are conscious of any wilful

Wickedness or Immorality. For who knoweth the Power of God's Anger, which can excite Horrors and Pains in the Minds of Sinners, intense and durable, beyond all Conception and Imagination? If we are afraid of falling under the Displeasure of the Great and Powerful of this World, who yet, when they have done their worst, can

only kill the Body, how much more fear-

ful must it be to fall into the Hands of the ever-living and omnipotent God, who after he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell?

Happy surely will it be (if it should happen to be the Case) for any of those, on whom the more gentle and ingenuous Motives of Religion have lost their Force, to be touched and roused by this most awakening and violent Consideration, to be persuaded even by the Terrors of the Lord, by their Apprehensions of the Divine Holiness and Justice, to stop short in their evil Course, and to make a Retreat in time from the astonishing Danger which lies before them. But the Thoughts of the Divine Sanctity may, not only inject Terror into

into the Minds of the Wicked, but cover SERM.
 the best of us with some Confusion, when V.
 we reflect on our many Failures and Mis-

carriages. *Who can say, I have made my* Prov. xx.

Heart clean, I am pure from Sin? This is⁹.

an Honour which mere Humanity never
 attains to, in any one Instance, in this
 World. Those who have made the clearest
Escape from the Pollutions of the World,
 and have arrived at the greatest Height of

¹⁰ Virtue, are usually not the least sensible of
 remaining Infirmities and Imperfections;
 and these, though they need not, as they
 are involuntary, greatly disturb them, nor
 ever destroy their Confidence in God, yet,
 may always hide Pride from their Eyes,
 and give them a mortifying and humbling
 Conception of Themselves, in the Sight of
 an omniscient and infinitely holy Being,
 who sees many more Defects and Blemishes
 in them, than they themselves can know;
 and make every one of Them, with the
 greatest Seriousness, to pray in the Words
 of David, *Enter not into Judgment with* Psal. cxliiii.
*thy Servant, for in thy Sight shall no Man*²
living be justified. Who can understand his —xix. 12.
Errors? Cleanse thou me from secret Faults.

5. The Consideration of the Divine Sanc-
 tity is a most powerful and urgent Motive
 to

SERM. to the Exercise of all Virtue. When a

V. Man, who from the Dictates of his own
 Conscience is already convinced of the great
 Dignity and Excellence of moral Goodness,
 and that he is naturally under an Obliga-
 tion to adhere to it, comes to find that this
 same Thing, that has so much intrinsick
 Worth, and the Practice of which is bound
 upon him by the Law of his Nature, is
 likewise most strictly required by the su-
 preme *Lawgiver, who is able to save, and*
to destroy; that it is the only Thing agree-
 able to his Nature, and absolutely necessary
 to render a Man acceptable to him; this,
 surely, must engage him to practise it with
 the utmost Zeal and Diligence. Indeed
 though a Man had so little Generosity, as
 to be no way moved or affected with the
 natural Amiability of Virtue, yet if he is
 but persuaded, that the Purity of God ne-
 cessarily determines him to take Cognizance
 of the moral Behaviour of Men, and will
 not permit him to receive any into his Fa-
 vour, but upon the Condition of universal
 Righteousness, he must be above all things
 sollicitous to raise all virtuous Affections in
 his Heart, and to exercise them uniformly
 in his Conversation and Behaviour in the
 World. It is, at least, certain, that none

Jam. iv.
12.

who has a just Notion of the Holiness of SERM.
the Deity, can be otherwise disposed, with- V.

out discovering, not only a great Defect in
all good Principles, but even a stupid Infa-
tuation as to the Point of his private Inte-
rest, or Gain. But the Consideration of
the Sanctity of the Divine Nature, must
strongly prompt and urge all, who have
any Ingenuity and Generosity of Mind, to
the Practice of Virtue, in another Way. It
is plain that we are formed so, as to desire
Esteem and Honour from other intelligent
Beings, and that the higher their Rank and
Dignity are, the more valuable their Ap-
probation appears to us, and the more ear-
nestly do we desire and seek it. The good
Opinion of the more discerning and worthy
of our own Species, is always coveted, as
one of the greatest Instances of Happiness
which can be obtained in this World, by
all who retain any native Probity and Good-
ness of Heart. The Esteem of Intelligen-
ces of a superior Order in the Universe, is
still more desirable and delightful: And
the Approbation of the great Father of all
derived intelligent Natures, the Fountain of
Reason and of all Excellence, is, in the
highest Degree, valuable and joyful. Now
as the Sanctity of God cannot but abhor all
moral

SERM. moral Evil in Men, and can approve of
 V. nothing in them but real Virtue, true Hon-
 nesty and Goodness of Heart and Life; whoever desire (and who that have the least Sense of Honour, or the least Spark of laudable Ambition, do not?) to gain the Approbation of this great Being, to stand fair in the Estimation of this most infallible Judge of Merit, *the God of Knowledge, by whom Actions are weighed*, who will do Justice to every Character, must hate all moral Turpitude, and keep at the utmost Distance from it, and cultivate an incorruptible Integrity, and endeavour to abound and excel in all good Qualities.

6. Lastly, The Sanctity of God is to be the great Object of our Imitation. As it is the distinguishing Honour of Man, above all other Creatures in this lower World, to be formed in the Image of God, to be capable by a good Use and Application of his higher Powers and Affections, of partaking, in some Degree, of the Perfection of his Creator, it must, certainly, be the Ambition and Care of all, who have any Respect for the Dignity of the human Nature, any Reverence for themselves, or any Notion of what is Decent, Generous, and Manly, to attain to as near a Resemblance

as they can have of the Divinity, from SERM.
whence their truest Glory and Felicity re- V.

sult. And as the Holiness of God is a most glorious Part of that Image of him, which we may bear, we should with the utmost Zeal and Diligence endeavour to resemble and imitate him in this Property; by cultivating and improving our natural Relish of Virtue, and strengthening and increasing our Aversion to Vice; by rendering our Sense of moral Good and Evil, so acute, quick, and vigorous, that it may easily direct and govern our Conversation; putting us upon the earnest Pursuit of all Things worthy and becoming, which tend to purify, ennoble, and exalt our Nature, and restraining us effectually from whatever is corrupt and low, which would debase, vilify, and depress us; and making us highly to reverence and love eminent Virtue in whatever Character and Station it is found, and to countenance, favour, and support all good Men, as far as we can, according to their Worth, and to express a noble Resentment and Detestation of flagrant and incorrigible Wickedness, even though it should be attended with the greatest outward Pomp, and to discourage, oppose, and punish all the Bad, with a Severity proportioned to the

SERM. Depravity and Iniquity of their Conduct.

- V. Thus must we endeavour to attain, according to our Measure and Capacity, to some Similitude of the perfect Purity and Righteousness of the Deity, if we would be thought to have any real Greatness of Mind in us; or, if we would answer the Intention of Christianity, which designs to bring all its
- 2 Pet. i. 4. Professors to a *Participation of a Divine Nature*, to make them *put on the New Man, which, after God, is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*; to render them
- Matt. v. 48. *Perfect, even as their Father who is in Heaven is Perfect, and Holy, in all manner of Conversation, as he who hath called them is Holy.*
- 1 Pet. i. 15.

S E R M O N VI.

The Nature, rational Grounds, and
necessary Qualifications of Prayer.

P S A L M LXV. 2.

*O thou that bearest Prayer, unto thee shall
all Flesh come.*

AS the common Light of Nature, SERM.
VI.
agreeably to this Intimation of the
Psalmist, has taught Mankind very
generally to look upon Prayer, as a neces-
sary and important Duty ; as in all the Re-
velations which God has given to the World,
it is frequently and earnestly recommended ;
as our Saviour has required it, both by his
Precepts, and Example ; as at the same
Time, it is a Thing, concerning which,
Men have been apt to run into great Errors
and Extremes, many having quite over-ra-
ted it, and laid by far too mighty a Stress
on it, while some others, by much the
L smaller

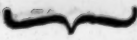
SERM. smaller Number indeed, have utterly con-
VI. temned it, and been altogether indifferent
and negligent about it; it must, certainly,
be very useful to us, to fix a true Notion of
this Duty in our Minds, to have a clear
View of the rational Grounds of it, and of
the Methods which may be necessary to
make our Performance of it, effectually an-
swer its End. I propose, therefore, in the
following Discourse, *First*, To explain a
little this Duty of Prayer. *Secondly*, To
inquire into the Reasons, for which it is
to be attended to, and performed by us.
Thirdly, To consider what Qualifications
may be requisite on our part, for rendering
our Prayers acceptable and successful. After
which, I shall conclude with a few gene-
ral Reflections upon this whole Subject.

I. I shall briefly explain this Duty of
Prayer. Prayer, according to the strict
Sense of the Word, and the original No-
tion of the Thing, is in General no more
than the offering our Desires, or Petitions
to God. Some other Things, indeed, have
for a long time, by Custom, been compre-
hended under the Word; such as Confes-
sion of our Sins, Adoration of the Majesty
of God, and Praise and Thanksgiving for
his

his Mercies: And as these several Acts of SERM.
Devotion may, in the Nature of Things, VI.

very properly accompany the Petitions or Requests which we address to our Maker, and should indeed generally go along with them, they, together with these Petitions, fitly enough furnish us with a large and complex Notion of Prayer. But for treating the Subject more distinctly, I shall confine myself at present, to the strict and original Notion of Prayer, as it signifies the laying our Desires before God, or, in the Apostle's Phrase, *the making our Requests*, Phil. vi. 6.
known unto him. For opening up which

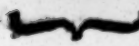
Duty more clearly, it must be observed,
1. That God is the Object to whom we are to address our Desires, or Requests. He, having all Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness, originally, independently, and immutably in himself, and being alone the Creator and Governor of the World, is most perfectly qualified, both to hear our Prayers, and to grant us any reasonable Requests which we offer to him, and according to the most obvious Dictates of Nature, must ever be the ultimate Object of all the Dependence and Hope of Mankind. As for praying to other Beings, whom we do not certainly

SERM. know to be capable of hearing and relieving us, and if we did know that they were, VI.  to whom we have no Authority or Command from the supreme Lord and Governor of all Things, to address ourselves; as it is a manifest Departure from the Simplicity both of natural Religion, and of Christianity, so it has always been, and, in the natural Order of Things, must ever be attended with very inconvenient and mischievous Consequences in the greatest Part of Men; distracting their Minds, and dividing their Affections, in the Times of their Devotion, when they should be more especially calm and recollected; diminishing their Regard to the God and Father of the Universe, and drawing them into an unjust Reliance on some of his Creatures, and into numberless Absurdities and Superstitions in the Devotions which they present to these, which are often substituted by them in the room of true Integrity and Virtue, and sometimes intended as a Compensation for the vilest and most shocking Acts of Wickedness. 2. As to the Matter of our Prayers, or the Things which we are to desire from God. These, in general, are such Things as are agreeable to his Will. And as we know that God designs the Happiness

ness both of our Souls and Bodies, and has SERM.
made us not only for high Enjoyment in VI.
the other World, but for some Share of it
in this, we may ask of him both inward
and outward Blessings, the Happiness not
only of the Life which is to come, but of
That which now is; but with this Differ-
ence, that we must be much more earnest
and solicitous to obtain spiritual and eternal
Blessings, than those which relate only to
our Bodies, and our Welfare in this present
State. For the Blessings of the Soul, and
of Eternity, such as Wisdom, Integrity,
and Virtue, being invariably and perma-
nently good to us, and the highest Trea-
sure that we can possess, we can never ex-
ceed in our Desires of them, nor ever be
over-diligent in the Use of any rational
Means for acquiring and increasing them;
whereas external Advantages, and what is
commonly accounted the Happiness of this
World, consisting in great Degrees of
Riches, Honours, Power, and such like,
being at least as often hurtful, as they are
beneficial to Men, and we being no proper
Judges of the Measures of them, which
would really conduce to our Good, we
must be always cool and moderate in our
Desires and Pursuits of these Things, and

SERM. beg of God to withhold from us those Degrees of them, which he knows we should abuse, however agreeable they might be to the fond and foolish Passions which sometimes arise in us, and to grant us only such a Portion of them as we may be capable of improving well, and may be most consistent with our Progress in Virtue, and our truest Happiness. This Order the natural Sense and Reason of our Minds, and likewise the Pattern which our Saviour has given us in the Prayer which is called his, require us to observe in our Petitions, or Requests for the different good Things, which we expect from our Maker. 3. As to the Meaning and Intention, with which we are to offer our Petitions to God. We are not to have it in our Thoughts, that we can ever communicate to God, any Knowledge of our Wants, which he has not before we mention them; or, that we can extort from him, by Solicitation and Importunity, any Favours, which either it would not become him to bestow, or which from the essential Purity and Goodness of his Nature, he is not always ready to confer upon his rational Creatures, when they are duly prepared and qualified for them. To think that we could ever do

any Thing of this sort, would be a very SERMON.
weak and rash Imagination, as well as a VI.
great Dishonour and Affront to the supreme
Being. But what we can rationally propose
by offering our Desires to the Deity, is to
declare our absolute Dependance upon, and
Submission to him our Maker, and natural
and rightful Governor; to profess the en-
tire Confidence which we have of his Do-
ing always what is best and fittest for us,
as well as the whole World of intelligent
Agents; and to render Ourselves still the
more worthy Objects of his Approbation
and Beneficence, by our exercising and ex-
erting, and thereby raising and strengthen-
ing the good Dispositions of our Hearts,
under an immediate and lively Sense of his
Presence; and particularly by our Compli-
ance with that Instance of his Will, requi-
ring our Addresses to him, as an Expression
of our Duty, and a Condition of partaking
of his Favours. 4. From hence it plainly
follows, which is the last Thing that I
shall take Notice of, for explaining this
Duty of Prayer, that in all our Petitions or
Requests to God, which have any Sense or
Meaning in them, some inward Principles
and Acts of Mind are necessarily presup-
posed, or included: Such as a clear Con-

SERM. VI.  viction of our Ignorance, and Impotence, and total Insufficiency to procure and establish our own Happiness; a firm Belief of the perfect Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Goodness of the great Creator and Sovereign of the Universe, enabling and disposing him to relieve and supply the Wants of his Creatures, and to communicate to them any Blessings, which they can justly claim, or expect from him; and lastly, an humble serious Application to this supreme Governor of the World for his Favour, with an assured Persuasion of obtaining it, in such Degrees and Instances, as will contribute most effectually to our true Felicity, when we faithfully endeavour to deserve it at his Hands. These inward Sentiments and Principles must animate and inspirit all the Petitions which we address to the Deity, in order to their being *a reasonable Service*. The Mind, or Heart, being the only Source of true Devotion, it is certain, that if our Understanding and good Affections do not accompany the external Performances of it, that these, how pompous or solemn soever they may appear to be, will at the best be but insignificant dead Forms, a mere Exercise of the Lips, which

is

is no more to be regarded, than the Noise SERM.
of *the sounding Brass, or tinkling Cymbal.* VI.

II. I shall now enquire into the Reasons,
for which this Duty is to be attended to,
and performed by us. And,

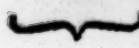
I. It must be obvious to every Man of
Reflection, that there is naturally in Man-
kind a strong Propensity to Prayer, ante-
cedently both to their Conception of it as a
religious Duty, and to their Consideration
of its Use and beneficial Tendency. We
have such an intimate Sense and Feeling of
our infirm, indigent, and dependent State:
There are such clear and strong Appear-
ances of our being always in the Hands of
a superior Agent, who has the absolute
Disposal of us, and all our Affairs, that by
a mere Impulse of Nature, without Deli-
beration and Reflection, we often have Re-
course to this higher Being, in the secret
Breathings and Wishes of our Hearts, for
his Protection and Favour. There are pro-
bably none, who have not frequently found
this to be the Case with Themselves, espe-
cially when they have fallen into any sud-
den Distress, or Danger. Even Those who
are most willing to banish God from all their
Thoughts, who make the greatest Progress
in real, or affected Atheism, are, upon ma-
ny

SERM. VI. ny Occasions, compelled, in Spight of all their Prejudices and Endeavours to the Contrary, to look up to the Author of their Beings, and Fountain of all Good: When such Persons meet with any unexpected Stroke, when they are alarmed with imminent Danger, or seized with the Apprehension of approaching Death, how quickly do most of them, at least, forget their former Speculations and Principles, and fly to that Being for Relief and Succour, who, according to the common and natural Notions of Mankind, is the indulgent and gracious Parent of the human Kind, and their only Refuge and Support in Cases of Extremity? Now as no Determination of Nature has been given us in vain, this Propensity which we naturally have to Devotion, very plainly indicates, that we are designed and made for the Exercise of it; and that as it will not be in our Power, if we resolved it ever so much, wholly to omit it, so we cannot allow Ourselves in the Neglect of it, without a manifest Contradiction to our Constitution, and Deviating into a different Course from that, which our original Bent points out to us, and directs us to pursue.

2. When

2. When we reflect upon the Act of SERM.
Prayer itself, to which we are by Nature VI.
so much disposed and prompted, we find
that it does not stand solely upon the Foun-
dation of a natural Propensity, but that it
approves itself to the calmest Judgment of
our Minds, and appears to be a Thing
highly worthy of us, and which we can-
not omit, or neglect, without an inexcus-
able Failure in the Homage and Duty
which we owe to our Creator, and just
and good Protector and Governor. Who-
ever considers the derived dependent Con-
dition of his Nature; that he received his
Being at first most freely from the Hands of
God, and is indebted to him constantly for
the Preservation of it; that he owes to
him, both all his present Enjoyments, and
all his future Hopes; and that he is neces-
sarily subject to his Controul and Govern-
ment, and will be always treated by him,
according to the most exact Measures of
Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness:
Whoever, I say, considers this to be the
State which he is in, must surely think it
extremely becoming him, to entertain and
cultivate the most lively Sense of his De-
pendance upon his great Creator and Go-
vernor, to express his Reliance upon him
for

SERM. for the Supply of his Wants, and his De-

VI.  fire of the Continuance of his Favour, without which, he could not even subsist for one Moment, much less partake of that great Happiness of which his Nature is capable; to declare his Confidence in the perfect Wisdom, Justice, Clemency, and Goodness of the Divine Administration, and his Acquiescence in all the Events, which, under the Direction and Government of God, befall him. There can, certainly, be no Man, who reflects duly upon the natural Condition of Men, and the Relation in which they stand to the Deity, and who has withal any Principles of Ingenuity and Gratitude in him, and any Notion of what is decent and respectful towards the most excellent Superior, and greatest Benefactor, but must be convinced that the Expression of these Sentiments, and the Exercise of these Dispositions towards God, is a Tribute of Acknowledgment and Honour most indispensably due to him from Mankind, and that none who consult the Dignity of their own Conduct, and pursue the Direction of the higher Principles in their Minds, can ever fall short in the Payment of it. Now as these Sentiments and Affections are most effectually

tually expressed and exerted, and at the same time, greatly heightened and strengthened by solemn Acts of Prayer, and as without Prayers of some Sort they can hardly

SERM.
VI.

be expressed and exerted at all, it is very plain, that Prayer is a Duty which the Consciences of Men must always recommend to them, and strictly charge them to perform. And as Prayer is thus approved and recommended by the Judgment of our own Consciences, so it is likewise approved and required by God himself: For though he can never be supposed to stand in Need of the Acknowledgment and Homage of weak Mortals, nor even of the highest of his Creatures; yet, as that Sense of Things, and those Dispositions of Heart, which put us upon offering our Petitions to him, and which constitute the Life of all true Devotion, are necessary to our Dignity and Happiness, as reflecting moral Beings, it is evidently a Thing very worthy of the Deity, and what might be expected from the Holiness and Goodness of his Nature, that he should insist upon our humble and dutiful Addresses to himself, and limit his Promises of Communicating his Favours to us, to the Condition of our applying for Them. Accordingly, we find, that he has required

our

SERM. our Praying to him, not only by his ori-

VI. ginal Law engraved in our Hearts, but by
 many positive Declarations of his Will in
 the Holy Scriptures, and that all the ex-
 plicit Promises which he has made us of
 any Blessings, are suspended upon the Con-
 dition of our asking them. He may, cer-
 tainly, if he pleases, prevent all the Desires
 of Men in bestowing his Favours, and *be*
found even of Those who seek him not; but, ac-
 cording to the best Judgment that we can
 form of his Conduct, either from the Light
 of Nature, or the Notices of Scripture, one
 Law taking Place, at least generally, in his
 Government of rational and moral Agents,
 is, that Those who are duly sensible of their
 Want of his Favour, and sincerely and sub-
 missively apply to him for it, shall receive
 it; while the Men, who affect to forget
 their Dependance upon him, and insolently
 refuse to make any Submissions and Ap-
 plications to him, shall be neglected and
 disregarded by him: Or, in other Words,
 James iv. 6. *that God will resist the Proud, but give Grace*
to the Humble. So that it is a very clear
 Case, that we cannot omit offering our
 Desires to God in Prayer, without both a
 most presumptuous, and a most imprudent
 Violation of our Duty.

3. Lastly,

3. Lastly, the great Advantage, or Use SERM.
VI.
of Prayer, may strongly recommend it to us. It would be tedious to enumerate particularly all the Advantages of Prayer: I shall only observe in general, that of all the Means which can be used, for advancing the Perfection, Dignity, and Happiness of human Nature, none will probably be more effectual, than the rational and serious Performance of this Duty. For what can be better adapted to open and enlarge, to improve and strengthen, and to refine and purify all our Faculties and Affections, than such attentive Meditations upon the Deity, and his most lovely Perfections, as are presupposed in all our rational Addresses to him; than our professing before him, who knows our Hearts, and is not to be deceived or mocked by us, our full Persuasion of his infinite Power, Knowledge, Righteousness, and Goodness, and our affectionate and entire Dependence on his Providence; than our expressing our perfect Satisfaction with the Wisdom and Equity of his Laws and Government, and our absolute Submission and Resignation to his Will and Pleasure; than our desiring him, as we shall do, if we pray with Understanding, to give us true Virtue and Goodness, and an Increase
of

SERM. of That, in all Piety, Justice, Charity, Meek-
VI. ness, and Temperance, above all other Possessions and Enjoyments; and to deliver us from the Dominion of Sin and Vice, and all the Remains of our Corruptions, rather than from Poverty, Sickness, or any other outward Calamity that can come upon us? These Things, if duly practised, and frequently repeated, in the solemn Acts of our Devotion, besides their laying us open to the Impressions of a Divine Light, and entitling us, according to the Promises of the Gospel, to the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the Prosecution of a virtuous Life, have a plain natural Tendency to raise us up to a noble Sublimity of Mind, and a great Elevation and Purity of Heart; as they make us familiarly and habitually conversant with the most excellent Objects, and in consequence of that, inspire us with the most generous Notions and Designs; as they render our Sense of moral Good and Evil, acute and prompt, and add Force to the Operation of all our most amiable Affections; and as they bring us under the Influence of such powerful Principles of Religion, as will be effectual Preservatives of our Integrity in all Times of Temptation, and enable us to make such an eminent

Progress

Progress in Virtue, as must highly adorn SERM.
our Characters, and gloriously distinguish VI.
our Conduct, from that of the Men who
never accustom themselves to the serious
Exercise of Devotion, who act from no
steady Regards to the Deity, but are almost
wholly led by the undirected Motions of
their natural Appetites and Passions. And
besides this Perfection and Dignity of Na-
ture, which we attain to by the Practice
of Devotion, a great deal of Pleasure, Se-
curity, and Peace, is also the Consequence
of it. The lively Exercise of our devout
Affections, is always accompanied with a
particular Joy, and sometimes with an over-
flowing and ravishing Delight, which settles,
as a Temper of Virtue, and of Confidence
towards God, grows out of the repeated
Exercises of these Affections, in an habitual
Serenity, and a solid and permanent Peace
of Mind; which puts us in the best Situ-
ation for enjoying any innocent Plea-
sures of the World, which renders us su-
perior to the unfortunate Accidents of Life,
and can make us even to rejoice in Death,
which we know will introduce us to that blef-
sed State, in which we shall be admitted into
a closer Union with the Fountain of Ex-
cellence and Happiness; where we shall

M

see

SERM. *see God as he is, and love him most fin-*

VI. *cerely and intensely, and partake of the Ful-*
ness of his Joy, and drink of the River of his

¹ John iii.

^{2.} Psalm xvi.

^{11.}

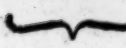
^{8.} xxxvi.

Pleasures for evermore. This, I know will be accounted very absurd and ridiculous Talk, by many Persons of profane and corrupt Minds, who are so far from having a Notion of the great Worth and Pleasure of Devotion, that they look upon it to be an Employment fit only for Children and Fools, and a miserably dry and insipid Entertainment. But so would many of the most sublime and beatifical Exercises of the Angels and Saints in Heaven be thought of by such Men too: The Truth is, it is impossible to them to judge of the real Worth and Value of these Spiritual Employments, as their higher Powers and Faculties, by which alone they can approve and relish them, are quite enslaved and oppressed by the inferior Principles in their Constitution, which give them a Taste for nothing but Objects of an entirely different Strain and Tendency. But as the Light is extremely pleasant to all who have Eyes to behold it, notwithstanding that the Blind receive no Joy from it; so the Practice of true Devotion is exceedingly agreeable to all who have inward Faculties to perceive and taste

its Pleasures, though to Those who want SERM.
such Faculties, it is a Thing of no Relish VI.
or Delight at all. Indeed the great Hap-
piness of a Life of serious Devotion, is al-
ways abundantly clear and certain to re-
ligious and virtuous Men themselves from
their constant Experience, and may, even
abstracting from private Experience, be evi-
dent enough to all, who fairly judge of it,
from its most obvious and apparent Effects.
For do not a Spirit of Piety and Faith in
God, always remarkably afford to Those in
whom they prevail, the purest Satisfaction
and Peace in all Conditions, and particu-
larly yield them that Support and Conso-
lation in Adversity, which nothing else
can give?

III. The *Third* Thing which I am to
do, is to consider what Qualifications are
necessary on our Part, to render our Prayers
acceptable and successful. And as These
may be, in a great measure, known from
what has been already said, and must in-
deed be always pretty obvious to Persons
of any Reflection, there will be no Necess-
ity for giving here any long Account or
Description of Them.

SERM. I. We must pray with Attention, Seri-

VI.  ousness, and Fervency. Attention to our Actions is necessary to make them merely rational or human Acts, and it is still more necessary to make any of them Acts of Religion. If we uttered ever such specious and plausible Words in our Addresses to God, while our Thoughts do not ascend to

Ecclef. v.
1.

him, we only *offer him the Sacrifice of Fools*, and are so far from honouring and pleasing him, that we affront and offend him, as we presume to trifle in his Presence, and treat him with a Neglect and Contempt, which would be quite unseemly in any Person, with respect to his Superior in this World. But it is not enough to pray barely with Attention; we must address Ourselves to our Maker, with great Seriousness and Fervour of Spirit: Not that the Earnestness or Vehemence of our Desires is wanted to move the Compassion or Goodness of the Deity; but as the great Ends of Prayer, such as impressing our own Minds with a deep Sense of our necessary Dependence upon our Creator, the fixing and raising our Confidence in him, and the strengthening and increasing all other good Dispositions in our Hearts, and rendering Ourselves in Consequence of all this, the
proper

proper Objects of the Divine Grace and SERM.
Favour ; as these Ends of Prayer, I say, are VI.

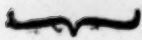
obtained, not by cold, languid, and unanimated Petitions, which can make no strong Impressions, nor produce any lasting Effects, but only by solemn, enlivened, and intent Applications to the Throne of Heaven, in which all our Powers are called forth to view and contemplate the Excellence and Goodness of the Divine Majesty, and full Scope is given to all those Affections and Desires, which naturally arise in us from such a View and Contemplation, it is necessary for the same Reasons for which we pray at all, that we pray with great Composure and Recollection, and with great Earnestness and Ardour of Mind. A Caution, however, is here proper to be given, which is, that we must take Care, lest under the Notion of praying with a necessary Earnestness and Warmth, we run into those artificial Commotions, and mechanical Heats, which many Persons throw themselves into, in the Exercise of their Devotion. These Things, which have a Foundation only in the Constitution of the Body, and a Disorder of the Imagination, and which often produce very unnatural and shocking Appearances in Men, we should

SERM. carefully guard against, as being utterly inconsistent with the Design of all true Devotion, and allow in ourselves only that Fervency in Prayer, which is the genuine Result of the clear and just Views that we have of the most important and interesting Objects, which, in its greatest Height, is under the Command of our rational Faculties, which never overpowers or impedes them, but always leaves room for their calmest and freest Exercise.

Luke
xviii. 1.
1 Theff.
v. 17.
Col. iv. 2.

2. We must pray with Constancy and Perseverance. This is required from us, in several Places of the *New Testament*, where we are bid to *pray always, and without ceasing, to continue in Prayer, and to watch in the same*; which we are not to understand so as if we were to shut ourselves up from the World, and spend our whole Time in spiritual Meditations, and Acts of Devotion: This is a Thing not possible in itself, and if it were possible, would be plainly repugnant to the Design of Religion, and inconsistent with other Duties, to which we are, at least, as strictly obliged as to this of Prayer. But the Meaning of these Directions is, that we should be habitually prepared for the Exercise of Devotion, by having those Principles always strong and lively

lively in our Minds, which are necessary, SERM.
 previously to our engaging in it, and which VI.
 dispose and prompt us to the Practice of
 it; that we should be often *lifting up our
 Hearts to God*, in some secret Prayers, or
 devout Ejaculations, according to the Op-
 portunities which the various Occurrences
 of Life afford us for doing so; and that
 we should never for any long time wholly
 omit or neglect Devotion, but should al-
 ways rather abound, than fall short in the
 just and becoming Expressions of it; and
 that we should have some stated Times,
 which we should observe as punctually as
 other necessary Duties will allow us to do,
 for making our more deliberate and solemn
 Addresses and Supplications to our Creator.
 The Reason of which Diligence and Con-
 stancy in Prayer, is not that the Repetition
 of our Requests, can ever be necessary to
 prevail upon God to grant us what we ask;
 but because the good Dispositions which
 Prayer is intended to form and raise in us,
 and which alone can make us capable of
 the Favour of God, are to be produced,
 improved, and perfected in us, not by our
 praying only rarely, or accidentally; but
 by an assiduous, patient, and regular At-
 tendance upon this Duty, as well as by

SERM. Zeal and Fervency in the Performance of
VI. it.

3. Another Qualification with which we are to offer our Prayers to God, is Faith.

Jam. i.
5, 6.

If any of you lack Wisdom, says St. James, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him; but let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering. By this is not to be understood a vain Assurance, or Presumption, of obtaining whatever we may ignorantly, or rashly desire from God, whether it be agreeable to his Nature to give it to us, or good for ourselves to have it, or not; which is the Notion of some Enthusiasts: But by it is meant our entertaining worthy and just Apprehensions of the Deity, and a Persuasion of his being both able and willing to grant us all those Instances of his Favour, which he knows to be necessary or convenient for us, when we sincerely apply to him for them, and endeavour to please him by the Performance of our whole Duty. This Confidence in God, which may very well arise from the Discovery which he has made of the several Perfections of his Nature in the Constitution and Government of the World, is plainly requisite in all, who mean to honour the Deity by their Prayers, and to address themselves to him with Understanding,

derstanding, and with such Zeal and Dili-
gence as are necessary to procure them Ac-
ceptance and Success in their Devotions. SERM. VI.

And besides this Faith in God, which the general Dictates of Nature and Reason recommend to all who pray to him, it is necessary for us, who are convinced of the Truth of Christianity, to pray particularly with the Faith of Christians, as the Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, and *in his Name*, acting in pursuance of his Commands, and by his Warrant or Authority, having an entire Dependance upon his Promises, and a full Assurance of obtaining whatever Blessings we ask from the Father, according to his Instructions and Directions. This Faith in the Promises of our Saviour, we should always take along with us in the Exercise of our Devotions, both because it is an Instance of that Respect and Honour which we owe to our blessed Lord, and because it is a thing which must give great Life and Energy to our Prayers, and enable us to carry on the Design of them with the surest Success and Effect.

4. We must pray with Minds purified from all Affection to Sin, and resolved upon all Virtue; and particularly free from all Malice and Ill-will, and disposed to univer-
sal

SERM. fal Charity and Forgiveness towards Man-

VI.

kind. To presume to appear before God in Prayer, while we have any Intention of practising Vice, or while we harbour any actual Inclination towards it in our Hearts, as it is the most outrageous Insult that we can possibly offer to the Majesty of God, being in Effect to declare that we take him to be an impure and unholy Being, who can *have Fellowship with Iniquity*, and be its Friend and Patron; so it must render our Prayers, not only unsuccessful, but altogether abominable and detestable. We must be free from all Wickedness at least in our Intentions and Desires, and determined to universal Righteousness and Obedience to the Laws of God, before we are in any Degree qualified to pray acceptably, or can reasonably hope for the least good Effect of our Devotions. And as the black and odious Vices of Rancour, Malice, and Revenge, are peculiarly contrary to the Nature of God, and inconsistent with the Designs of his Mercy and Goodness towards his Creatures, we must particularly *put away from us all these*, and express a Temper of universal Benevolence, Meekness, and Forgiveness to our Brethren, in order to the obtaining that Mercy and Forgiveness to

Eph. iv.
31.

to ourselves, which we want and desire SERM. VI.
from the common Father and Governor of

Mankind. That our praying in this good Temper of Charity, is a necessary Condition of our praying successfully, is plain from many Passages in the *New Testament*, and particularly from the Prayer which our Lord prescribed to his Disciples. And the Equity of this Condition is very convincingly and affectionately taught us by our Saviour, in the Expostulation of the Lord, with the unrelenting and unforgiving Servant, in the Parable; *O thou wicked Servant, I forgave all that Debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest thou not also have had Compassion on thy Fellow-servant, even as I had Pity on thee?* And the same Thing is very well declared to us by the wise Son of Syrach, *One Man beareth Hatred against another, and doth he seek Pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no Mercy to a Man who is like himself, and doth he ask Forgiveness of his own Sins?*

Mat. xviii.
32, 33.

Ecclesi.
xxviii.
3, 4.

5. Lastly, To render our Prayers successful, we must follow them with our own Endeavours to obtain the good Things for which we pray. For the Design of Prayer, being not to supersede the use of our natural Faculties, but to enliven and strengthen them,

SERM. them, and to procure us a divine Assistance
VI. in exerting them, if we stop at sending up
our Petitions to Heaven, and do not go on,
in that Strength which is communicated to
us, and in a Dependence upon those farther
Aids which may be expected from the Be-
nignity of our heavenly Father, to exert
our Powers, and to do the best that we
can for ourselves, we evidently counteract
the Design of this Duty, and must, cer-
tainly, fall short of the Benefits, which
might otherwise be expected from the Per-
formance of it. Indeed as we are rational
and moral Agents, we can never attain to
our true Happiness, by any Means, which
prevent the full Exercise of our intellectual
and moral Powers, and exclude our Acti-
vity and Care: The Constitution of our Be-
ings, and the Order of our Nature, will
not permit that we should. And therefore
to expect that God should grant That to
our bare Requests, which, according to the
Design of his Creation, and the established
Laws of his Government, is to be the Ef-
fect, not only of our Requests to him, but
likewise of our subsequent Pains and Dili-
gence, would be fatally to impose upon
ourselves. God must, in all Reason, be
thought to do enough for us, when besides
his

his upholding us in the Existence which SERM.
he has given us, he always grants us, upon VI.
our serious, fervent, and faithful Applica-
tions to him, such a Measure of his Favour
and Assistance, as in a due Exercise and
Improvement of our own Abilities, will be
abundantly sufficient, both for our present
Welfare, and our future Happiness: And
if we are disappointed in attaining to these,
we must impute it only to a wretched
Negligence and Sloth, or to some worse
Principles and Dispositions in Ourselves.

I shall put an End to this Discourse,
with a few short Reflections and Observa-
tions upon what has been delivered.

1. From what has been said, we may
see the Weakness and Fallacy of those Ar-
guments, which have been sometimes used,
(even by Persons, who have pretended to
acknowledge an original supreme Maker
and Governor of the World) to prove the
Absurdity and Impertinence of Prayer, taken
from the Omniscience of God, which sets
him above all want of our Informations;
from the Certainty of his Counsels and
Measures, which are never to be altered
by any Applications and Intreaties of ours;
and from his perfect Wisdom, Goodness,
and Righteousness, which both enable and
determine

SERM. determine him to do always what is best

VI. and fittest for all his Creatures, without being solicited and importuned to it, by poor Mortals upon this Earth. The Fallacy, I say, of these Arguments may be easily discovered from what has been discoursed, which makes it plain, that they proceed upon a quite mistaken Notion of the Design of Prayer, which is, not to acquaint the Deity with any thing that he was before ignorant of, nor to move him to depart from the settled Measures of his Government over rational Agents, nor to excite any Disposition, which was not always strong and fixed in him, to pity and do good to his Creatures; but to prepare and qualify ourselves for his Approbation and Beneficence; to raise, improve, and confirm, by our solemn Addresses to him, all those good Dispositions and Affections of Heart, which, from the essential Perfections of his Nature, and the unalterable Laws of his most wise and righteous Government, are the only sure Foundation, upon which we can hope for his Acceptance and Favour. Now if this true End of Prayer be kept in View, it must be very evident, that the perfect Knowledge of God, and the immutable Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice of
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of his Administration, are so far from being SERM.
Arguments against this Duty, that they af- VI.
ford the strongest Reasons for exciting us }
to Zeal, Diligence, and Constancy in the
Practice of.

2. We may here see how much those Persons mistake and abuse the Duty of Prayer, who content themselves merely with the external Performance of it, and substitute this as the Ground of their Expectation of the Favour of God, though they are altogether careless about all other Branches of their Duty. For as the great Purposes of Prayer, are, not so much to pay an outward Homage to the Deity, or to present our Complements and Applauses to him, as to exercise and express all the good Affections towards him, which naturally arise in us, from a Sense of our Dependance on him, and the Contemplation of his most amiable Perfections, and to improve and strengthen these Affections, in order to their governing more effectually our whole Conduct in the World; it is plain that the great Multitudes of Persons, who are so apt to take up with a *Form of Godliness* and Devotion, while there is nothing either in their Hearts, or in the Conduct of their Lives, answerable to such an Appearance,

SERM. pearance, most grossly mistake, and con-
 VI. tradict the Ends of Prayer, and instead of
 offering a rational and acceptable Worship
 to their Maker, only run into a most ab-
 surd and useless, and even a most dangerous
 and hurtful Superstition.

3. From a due Attention to what has
 been discoursed, we may learn, how the
 outward Circumstances of Prayer, such as
 the Forms and Modes, the Postures, Times,
 and Places of performing it, are to be or-
 dered and regulated. These Things, which
 are all variable in their Nature, and may
 be diversified according to the different
 Apprehensions and Tempers of Men, are
 to be determined by Every One, in the
 Exercise of his private Devotion, in such a
 Manner, as from the Knowledge and Ex-
 perience which he has of Himself, he
 judges will enable him most effectually to
 carry on the great Designs of his Prayers.
 In Publick, indeed, for avoiding Disorder
 and Indecency, the appointed Forms and
 Methods of Prayer must be used, while
 there is nothing in them inconsistent with
 our Attainment to the true Ends of this
 Duty. But in the Practice of private De-
 votion, every Person is at Liberty to chuse
 such Forms, Gestures, and Seasons for
 Prayer,

Prayer, as are suited to his Temper, and **SERM.**
contribute most to compose and elevate his **VI.**
Thoughts, and to confirm and improve all
pious and good Affections in Him; and
whoever would discharge this Part of his
Duty with a due Care, will always fix on
those external Circumstances of his Devotion,
which he finds to have the best Effect
upon his Mind.

4. Lastly, We may observe, that what
has been here delivered upon the Subject
of Prayer in general, may be applied, not
only to the Prayers of particular Persons,
but, in a great Degree, to the Prayers of
Men united in smaller, or larger Societies;
in private Families, or the publick Assemblies
of the Church: Particularly, the same
Reasons, or the strongest of Them, which
have been offered for the Prayers of Individuals,
are equally conclusive for the social
and publick Prayers of Men; as These,
no less than the Other, are just Expressions
of that Respect and Honour, which are due
to the Supreme Being, and have the plainest
Tendency to promote the Dignity and
Happiness of our Nature. Indeed a social
and publick Worship of God, is recommended
by some distinct Considerations: But it is enough
to observe here, that who-

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ever,

SERM. ever, upon the Principles laid down in this

VI. Discourse, admit the Necessity and Use of
 ~~~~~ Prayer in the Case of particular Persons,  
 can hardly fail to acknowledge the Propriety and Advantage of social and publick Devotion, and to look upon the Contempt, or Neglect of it, as a Thing very inexcusable.

S E R.



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## SERMON VII.

The Nature, various Kinds, Causes,  
and evil Consequences of Super-  
stition; with Reasons for guard-  
ing against it, and the Methods  
of preventing, or remedying it.

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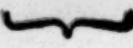
ACTS xvii, 22.

*Then Paul stood in the Midst of Mars-Hill,  
and said, ye Men of Athens, I perceive  
that in all Things ye are too Superstitious.*

**T**HE Charge which St. Paul here SERM.  
VII.  
advances against the *Athenians*,  
might, perhaps, always have been,  
and may still, with too much Truth, be  
brought against the greatest Part of Man-  
kind. A Proneness to Superstition, is  
plainly one of those Weaknesses which are  
most incident to human Nature, from which  
even great Degrees of Understanding and  
Wisdom are not always sufficient wholly to  
N 2 exempt

SERM. exempt us. If a pure and rational Devo-

VII.  tion was to have been found universally taking Place in any Part of the World, it might very reasonably have been expected in *Athens*, which in *St. Paul's* Time, and long before it, was the principal Seat of Philosophy and Learning, and of all polite and liberal Education; but notwithstanding this Advantage, we find that the People of this celebrated City, according to the Apostle's Account of them, which is the same with that which has been given of them by other ancient Writers, were fallen into a most absurd and gross Superstition, having for the most part no clear and distinct Notions of the true God of the Universe, being always ready to increase and multiply their Deities, and to receive even unknown Beings into the Number of them, and to make use of any vain or immoral Rites for pleasing and honouring these Deities, which their weak Apprehensions and idle Fears suggested to them. As therefore a Propensity to Superstition is an Infirmary so common to Mankind, and as it is withal a Thing of very dangerous Tendency, it may be of great Use to put Men upon their Guard against the Prevalence of it in their Minds; or, if they are already  
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in any Measure infected with it, to deliver SERM.  
them from it by proper Instructions and **VII.**  
Directions. 

That I may contribute a little to this  
End, I shall in the following Discourse take  
these several Things into Consideration.

- I. The Nature, various Kinds, and usual  
Causes of Superstition.
- II. The evil Tendency and unhappy Con-  
sequences of it.
- III. The Reasons which should make us  
guard against it, and oppose it.
- IV. The Methods of preventing or reme-  
dying it. After which I shall make a  
few general Reflections upon this Subject.

I. I shall consider the Nature, various  
Kinds, and usual Causes of Superstition.  
Superstition is a Word which has not one  
precise and determinate Signification, and  
it would be hard to give any Definition of  
this Term, which would comprehend the  
several Things to which it is applied \*. It

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denotes

\* Superstition, according to the Propriety of the Original  
Word, signifies the Worship of *Dæmons*, or the Souls of  
dead Men : And indeed Idolatry, in this, and every other  
Form of it, is Superstition. But there is a more general  
Notion of Superstition, both in ancient and modern Wri-  
ters, which includes the several Species of false Devotion,  
or



SERM. denotes different Dispositions and Affections  
 VII. of Mind, the Nature of which will be best  
 understood, by considering the several  
 Kinds of Superstition which have prevailed  
 among Mankind. The Foundation of all  
 Superstition seems indeed to be laid in false  
 or unworthy Notions of that Power which  
 governs the Universe, and upon the Exer-  
 cise of which the Happiness or Misery of  
 Men depends. But as these false Notions  
 have been different in the Minds of Men,  
 they have given Rise to different Kinds and  
 Instances of Superstition. Thus, an Ap-  
 prehension that the Being, or Beings, sup-  
 posed to be concerned in the Government  
 of the World, were severe and cruel, ar-  
 bitrary and tyrannical in their Admini-  
 stration, delighting in the Torments and  
 Misery of Mankind, has often begot a most  
 slavish Fear and Dread of them, which has  
 urged the Persons possessed with this Fear  
 to the most impious and inhuman Practices  
 for appeasing the Wrath of these Beings,  
 and entitling Themselves to their Protection  
 and

or the various Affections which arise in Men towards real or  
 imaginary Beings, falsely supposed to be Divine, according  
 to the Conceptions which they have of their Nature and  
 Qualities; or towards the true God, from a mistaken, or  
 unworthy Conception of some Part of his Character. And  
 in this largest and most extensive Sense, Superstition is treated  
 of in this Discourse.

and Favour. And this is a Sense of Su-  
perstition which frequently occurs in ancient  
Writers, as indeed there were many dismal  
Instances of the Thing, as there still are,  
in several Parts of the *Heathen* World.

SERM.  
VII.

Again; A Conception of the Governor  
of the World, as not acting from a steady  
and uniform Regard to moral Piety and  
Virtue, but as being influenced in the Ex-  
pressions of his Favour or Displeasure to-  
wards Mankind, by a Passion like Vanity  
and Conceit in Men, by an Affectation of  
Praise and Glory, a Love of Pomp and  
Pageantry, and a Fondness to intricate Spe-  
culations and incomprehensible Notions,  
has produced another Sort of Superstition,  
consisting in a Disposition to flatter the  
Deity, and to put him off with Comple-  
ments and Applauses, Fawnings and Cring-  
ings, Temples, Altars, Images, Processions,  
and all Sorts of ceremonious Services; with  
a Zeal and Punctuality about the external  
Forms, Rites, and Modes of Devotion;  
with Heat and Violence in maintaining and  
propagating true Opinions, and a Forward-  
ness to believe all Things recommended by  
the Name of high and awful Mysteries,  
however absurd, and contradictory to the  
plainest Dictates of common Sense and Un-

SERM. derstanding. This is a Kind of Supersti-  
VII. tion which has always abounded greatly in  
the World; There was a vast deal of it  
among the *Heathens*, as well as of the more  
unnatural and inhuman Kind of Super-  
stition, The *Jews* were very remarkable  
for it, especially in their later and more de-  
generate Times, when they almost univer-  
sally substituted it in the Room of all true  
Piety and Goodness. Nor have *Christians*,  
notwithstanding the rational and clear No-  
tions which their Religion has delivered of  
the Nature of God, and the great Sim-  
plicity of the Worship which it has pre-  
scribed towards him, been by any Means  
free from it. Perhaps there have been but  
Few of any Denominations of them, who  
have not had some Tincture of this Super-  
stition, which has, at least, inclined them  
to lay an undue Stress upon little Things,  
and to contend for them with too great  
Zeal and Vehemence; and it is certain,  
that some whole Sects and Churches of  
professed *Christians* have been chargeable  
with it in the grossest Manner, having  
considerably improved upon the Follies of  
their Predecessors in this Sort of Supersti-  
tion, and introduced such extravagant Fop-  
peries into their Forms of religious Wor-  
ship,



ship, and such flagrant Absurdities into the SERM.  
Systems of their Belief, and discovered such VII.  
a frantick Zeal in propagating them, as  
exceed Every Thing of the Kind, that was  
to be found among the ancient *Jews* and  
*Heathens*.

Besides these, there is another Kind of Superstition, which, if it has any Meaning at all in it, must likewise arise from unworthy Notions of the Government of the World, as if it was administered, not by any fixed Measures of Wisdom and Goodness, but by Caprice, Fancy, and unaccountable Humour; making the Prosperity or Adversity of Men to depend upon the merest Trifles, and the most fortuitous Events and Occurrences. This sort of Superstition consists in Regarding Omens and Presages, in taking Hints of good or bad Fortune, from Things happening on lucky or unlucky Days, from Dreams, Predictions of Astrologers and Fortune-tellers, accidental and transient Sensations, or natural Impressions upon the Bodies of Men, and innumerable other Things which can never be a reasonable Foundation for our Hopes or Fears at all; and in using Charms, or any foolish and impertinent Forms and Ceremonies, for procuring Good, and averting  
ing

SERM. ing Evil. This is a Superstition, which  
VII. has likewise been very common among  
Mankind, and appears still in a great many  
Instances, which must be very well known  
to every Man of Observation and Experience; and it is of a distinct Species from  
the other Sorts of Superstition, as it implies a different Disposition of Mind, and  
influences Men chiefly in their Conduct of  
the common Affairs of Life, and is not  
practised by them, at least for the most  
part, under the Appearance of Devotion  
and Zeal in Religion, as the other Kinds  
of Superstition are.

As for the Causes of these several Kinds  
of Superstition; there is one fundamental  
and general Cause of them all, without  
which, other more particular and immediate  
Causes could have no great Force for  
producing them: This is a *Neglect of a  
free and vigorous Use of Reason*. God has  
certainly made a sufficient Discovery of  
Himself to the Reason of Mankind, and  
none who attend to, and seriously reflect  
upon, the clear Evidences of infinite Wisdom,  
Power, Righteousness, and Goodness,  
which abound in the Universe, particularly  
in the Constitution of human Nature, can  
be ignorant of his Nature and Perfections;  
and

and from a Consideration of the Perfections SERM.  
of God, and of those Powers, which he VII.  
has given to Men, we may easily infer what  
that Worship is, which alone can be agree-  
able to Him from Us. But it is plain, that  
Mankind are stupidly inattentive to this  
most important of all Truths, *the Existence*  
*of the Being who is First and Supreme in the*  
*Universe, the perfectly wise, powerful, and*  
*just Creator and Governor of all Things,*  
and to the Consequences which most obvi-  
ously flow from it; that though the Evi-  
dences of this great Principle of Religion  
are indeed so strong as to force themselves,  
in some Degree, into almost every Under-  
standing, yet the greatest part of Men do  
not examine them with that Diligence and  
Impartiality which are necessary to their  
forming a just and consistent Scheme with  
regard to the Deity, and the Respect and  
Homage which are due to him from Man-  
kind, but are apt to *become vain in their*  
*Imaginations* concerning these Things, to  
bring human Frailties and Passions into the  
Character of the Deity; or to divide the  
*Godhead*, and parcel out the Divine Perfec-  
tions among a Multitude of Beings, and to  
hold the most monstrous Opinions of these  
imaginary Divinities, which, being never  
brought



SERM. brought to the Test of Reason, nor corrected  
VII. by its Decisions, prove the Foundation of  
the grossest Idolatry, and the most absurd  
and impious Superstition.

But besides this general and more remote Cause of Superstition, there are several direct and immediate Sources of it.

The first is Customary Tradition: False Notions of the Divinity, or of Divine Beings or Powers, being once introduced, are easily propagated and handed down, with all the idolatrous and superstitious Consequences of them, from one Generation to another; Men usually being of very resigned Understandings in Matters of Religion, having an implicit Reliance on the Wisdom of former Times, and acquiescing without Doubt or Scruple in the several Articles of Belief, and the several Forms and Modes of Devotion, which have been happily received and held by their Forefathers for many Ages.

Another Source of Superstition, may be found in the natural Tempers of Men. The prevalent Affections and Passions of our Minds, have usually a great, and often an insensible, Influence on our Apprehensions and Judgments, and are apt to give a Tincture to our Notions and Opinions on  
all

all Subjects ; and particularly on those most SERM.  
important and interesting Subjects, the Cha- VII.  
racter of the Governor of the World, and  
that Worship of Him which is necessary to  
recommend us to his Favour. Thus, a dark  
and gloomy, a timorous and suspicious  
Temper, naturally presents to Those in  
whom it prevails, a frightful Image of the  
Deity, as a Being of irresistible Power, and  
at the same Time full of Wrath and Jeal-  
ousy, partial, stern, and inexorable ; and  
in consequence of this, raises in them the  
most detestable of all superstitious Affecti-  
ons, a servile Dread of this horrible Spectre,  
prompting them, in order to appease his  
Fury, to exercise the most unnatural Seve-  
rities and Barbarities both upon themselves  
and others. Again : A Mind possessed  
with an Admiration of Grandeur and Pomp,  
with a Love of Ceremony and Complement,  
Respect and Distinction, is apt to form a  
Deity of its own Complexion ; to paint to  
itself an Idol actuated by Pride, Ambition,  
and Ostentation of Power, delighting highly  
in the Applauses, ceremonious Attendances,  
and abject Submissions of poor Mortals, and  
so runs into that Superstition, which con-  
sists in idle Adulations of the supreme Be-  
ing, in the Observance of external Forms,  
and

SERM. and all that Pageantry of Devotion, which,  
VII. however unworthy of a perfect Mind, al-  
ways gives great Amusement and Pleasure  
to the Imaginations of weak and vain Men.  
In like manner, a natural Warmth and Ar-  
dor of Temper, which is so apt to shew  
itself in almost every Part of a Man's Con-  
duct, frequently mixes with his Religious  
Dispositions, and produces in him a super-  
stitious Zeal for trifling or absurd Specula-  
tions, and the variable Forms and Circum-  
stances of Divine Worship, making him to  
contend for Matters of small, or no Import-  
tance, as if they were of the greatest Im-  
portance; or to prefer them to Things  
which are really of the utmost Consequence  
in Religion.

But, Thirdly, The most universal Source  
and greatest Support of Superstition, is the  
Corruption of Men's Hearts. There are,  
perhaps, but very Few, who can utterly  
extinguish all Sense of the Deity, and the  
Duty which they owe to him in their  
Minds, and entirely get over all Hopes and  
Fears about a future State: The greatest  
Part even of bad Men always retain some  
Notion of the main Principles of Religion,  
and are frequently disposed to do some-  
thing for quieting their Consciences, and  
entitling



entitling themselves to the Favour of God SERM.  
in another World. But Many of them, VII.  
being most miserably intangled in a Course  
of Vice, and fond above all Things of forbidden Enjoyments, cannot prevail with themselves to secure the Peace of their Minds and the Favour of God, by the best, and indeed the only effectual Method of doing it, a sincere and universal Reformation. What then remains for Them, is to compound Matters as well as they can with the Deity; to offer him as Equivalents for Repentance and Amendment of Life, costly Oblations, stately Edifices, humble Prostrations, rigorous Penances, a mighty Zeal for Opinions and Points of Faith, and unwearied Diligence in Matters of outward Form and Ceremony. By these, and such like Things, which, to their foolish Imaginations, have the Appearance of great Respect and Devotion towards the supreme Being, they delude their Consciences, and hope as effectually to please God, and secure his Acceptance, as they could do, *by living soberly, righteously, and godly in the World.* A superstitious Religion, therefore, which abounds with Expedients for obtaining the Favour of God, and the Happiness of a future State, without the Practice

SERM. tice of true Piety and Virtue, is the natural  
 VII.  Refuge of wicked Men, who are possessed  
 of no great Measure of Reflection, and are  
 willing to be deceived: This is what Per-  
 sons of this Character must be extremely  
 fond of, and what they will immoveably  
 adhere to; because the Moment they quit-  
 ted it, they would find all their Hopes sub-  
 verted, and nothing in their Minds but the  
 most dismal Perplexity and Horror.

To these Causes of Superstition which  
 have been mentioned, we must add, in the  
 last Place, the Policy and Craft of many of  
 the Leaders of Mankind, as another Source  
 and Support of it. The Proneness of Man-  
 kind to Superstition, and the Handle which  
 this affords for subjecting them to the Views  
 of Men of Address and Cunning, are Things  
 too obvious not to be taken Notice of, by  
 Persons aiming at a State of Wealth and  
 Grandeur, of great Power and Dominion.  
 It has therefore been always the Business  
 of the Politicians of this World, nicely to  
 observe, and artfully to sooth all popular  
 Superstitions; instead of endeavouring to  
 correct and cure the Weaknesses of the hu-  
 man Mind which render Men so liable to  
 Delusions, to strengthen and improve them;  
 to give new Matter, from Time to Time, to

the superstitious Affections of the Multitude SERM.  
to work upon, and to keep their blind Zeal VII.  
in constant Exercise and Employment, in  
order to divert their Attention from their  
own wicked Designs, and by the sacred  
Ties of Religion to bind Them more firmly  
in their Chains, and render Them more  
entirely subservient to the Purposes of their  
Avarice, Pride, and Tyranny.

II. I proceed now to represent the unhappy Tendency, and evil Consequences of Superstition.

And for treating this Part of the Subject more distinctly, we must observe, that as there are various Kinds and Degrees of Superstition, they have not all the same malignant Tendency and Influence. Every Instance and Degree of Superstition is indeed dangerous, as it has some Tendency to corrupt the Mind, or, at least, to introduce a greater Degree of Blindness and Folly into it; and as it always imposes some unnecessary Burthen or Uneasiness upon the Persons possessed with it: But some Sorts and Instances of Superstition are very innocent and harmless, in Comparison of the grosser and more flagrant Kinds and Degrees of it. It is plain that there

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are



SERMON are several Instances of Superstition, proceeding from some Mixture of Error, or some Confusion in Men's Notions of the supreme Being, or, perhaps, merely from their Inattention to his known Attributes, and the plain Declarations of his Will, consistent with the sincerest Exercise of Piety and Virtue, being often found in some of the best of Christians; and that the worst Consequences of them are the Disturbance and Terror which they raise in honest Minds for imaginary Defects, and the great Trouble and Pains which they put them to, about some Points and Circumstances, no way necessary to the acceptable Performance of their Duty. But when the superstitious Affections of Men arise from the most unworthy Conceptions of the Divine Nature, and become very strong and powerful in them, nothing is more ruinous to a good State of Mind, and attended with more pernicious and fatal Consequences.

The first and most immediate Effect of such superstitious Dispositions, is the Destruction of the Principles of a rational Piety, with their salutary and happy Influences. It is certain that well-regulated Affections towards the Deity, founded upon just Sentiments of his Nature, are not only

only most amiable and becoming Qualities SERM.  
of the Mind, but of very great Importance VII.  
to the good Conduct and Happiness of  
Life, having a mighty Efficacy for enga-  
ging Men to every Part of their Duty, and  
proving constant Sources of Consolation and  
Joy to them, in every Circumstance and  
Condition in which they can be placed in  
the World. But these Affections, of what-  
ever Importance and Use they may be to  
Mankind, are extremely weakened, or ra-  
ther almost totally destroyed, by blind and  
violent Superstitions, which usurp the Place  
of them, and cut off their beneficial Influ-  
ence; shutting out of the Mind all rational  
Apprehensions, and consequently well or-  
dered Dispositions with respect to the su-  
preme Being, with all that Security and  
Confidence, and that Pleasure and Peace  
which good Men always find in the Exer-  
cise of a reasonable Piety, or in the Prac-  
tice of true Religion.

But the Evil of these Superstitions does  
not rest here: For besides the Destruction  
which they bring on the religious Affecti-  
ons of Men, they universally corrupt their  
Consciences, and undermine the Founda-  
tions of moral Honesty and social Virtue  
which are naturally laid in their Minds,

SERM. and, under the Warrant of a supposed Di-  
 VII. vine Authority, hurry them to the Com-  
 mission of Crimes, not only inconsistent  
 with Religion, but shocking to Humanity  
 itself. The direful Influence of the grosser  
 and more violent Superstitions in extinguish-  
 ing the natural Light of Men's Minds, and  
 defacing their Notions of moral Good and  
 Evil, in suppressing and perverting their  
 social Instincts and Affections, and re-  
 conciling them to, and even making them  
 to delight in Actions, which their Nature,  
 exerting itself according to its original Con-  
 stitution, would greatly abhor, must be  
 well known to all who are acquainted with  
 human Nature, and have been conversant  
 in the History of the World. It is plain,  
 that from hence arose the Use of human  
 Sacrifices, directly offered up in Honour of  
 the *Gods of the Gentiles*, and often attended  
 with Circumstances of the most horrid and  
 unnatural Barbarity; a Practice, which,  
 without the Authority of a sacred Writer,  
 we might have assuredly pronounced an  
 Deut. xii. *Abomination to the Lord*, and which no  
 31. Man, whose Mind was not most dreadfully  
 blinded and corrupted, could ever have  
 gone into, or have thought of, without  
 the utmost Aversion. From the same  
 Source



Source has proceeded that wild Fury in SERM.  
Men, of lacerating and mangling their Bo- VII.  
dies, and exposing them to various Pe-  
nances and Sufferings, for pacifying their  
fictitious Deities, which has been so com-  
mon both in ancient and modern Times;  
a thing directly contrary to some of the  
strongest Instincts of Nature, and which  
necessarily debases the Mind, damping all  
generous Sentiments and Dispositions in it,  
calling off its Attention from the Cultiva-  
tion of truly virtuous Principles, and filling  
it only with low and groveling Notions,  
and a Zeal for Matters which throw Dis-  
grace upon the rational Nature. From  
this Fountain has likewise flowed the ac-  
curSED Spirit of Persecution, which has  
done an infinite Prejudice to the Tempers  
of Mankind, and produced the greatest  
Destruction and Misery in human Society;  
which has prompted Men to promote, what  
they have called the Honour of God and  
the Cause of true Religion, but in Truth,  
the Interest of wicked Men and a System  
of gross and pernicious Errors, by all the  
Methods of Cruelty, Treachery, and False-  
hood; by Fire, and Sword, and Devas-  
tation of Countries; by Imprisonments,  
Racks, and Tortures; by open Seditions

SERM. and Rebellions ; by dark Conspiracies, and  
VII. Midnight-Massacres ; by Breach of the  
most solemn Covenants and Oaths ; by  
the most notorious Lies and Forgeries ; in  
short, by trampling under foot every reli-  
gious and moral Obligation ; by breaking  
all the Ties of Conscience and Humanity,  
by ceasing to act in the Spirit of Men, and  
turning Tygers and Serpents, the most  
fierce, venomous, and deceitful Beasts of  
Prey towards one another : Things so re-  
pugnant to the whole Constitution of our  
Nature, that it is not possible to conceive  
how any human Mind could consent to  
them, much less take Pleasure in them,  
which was not first imposed on by some  
false Appearances of Devotion, and insti-  
gated to them from an Opinion of their  
being the most acceptable Service which  
Men could do to that Being, in whose  
Power it is to make them inconceivably  
happy or miserable for ever. From the  
same Original is also derived that Narrow-  
ness of Mind, and that intemperate and  
warm Zeal in Men, which, when they do  
not urge them to go the Length of Extir-  
pation, kindle in them great Animosity  
and Wrath against all who differ from  
them, in, perhaps, some very disputable  
Opinions,

Opinions, or in some Points and Circum-  
stances no way essential to Religion, mak-  
ing them censorious and uncharitable, to  
revile and hate their Brethren, to account  
them odious to God and Enemies to his  
Cause, and in Consequence of this, not  
only to exclude them from their religious  
Communion, but to be shy of their Com-  
pany, and abstain as much as they can  
from all Communication and Commerce  
with them in Civil Matters; in direct Op-  
position, not only to the Genius of Christi-  
anity, but to all that Tenderness, Gentle-  
ness, Forbearance, and Benevolence, for  
the Practice of which, human Nature is so  
plainly formed. From the Influence of the  
grosser Superstitions proceeds likewise, in  
the last Place, an Incurable of Tem-  
per, or such an Obstinacy in Error and  
Vice, as is at least extremely hard to be  
overcome, or removed. Superstition, that  
pestilent Distemper of the Mind, resembles  
some malignant Distempers of the Body,  
which propagate and encrease the ill Hu-  
mours from whence they sprung: Whate-  
ver Stupidity and Ignorance, whatever Mis-  
takes, Prejudices, and corrupt Passions,  
gave Rise to the superstitious Affections of  
Men, or were in them when they took  
O 4 place;



SERM. place ; all these are exceedingly raised and  
VII. strengthened by the Prevalence of those  
Affections ; the Persons under the Power  
of them, being effectually restrained by  
them from examining their Notions and  
Opinions, and questioning any Part of their  
Conduct ; holding the grossest Absurdities  
for the most certain Divine Truths, and  
thinking themselves obliged to adhere to  
them upon pain of Damnation ; and ima-  
gining, while they are contradicting the  
End of all Religion, and practising the most  
detestable Villanies and Inhumanities, that  
they are arriving at the Heroism and Per-  
fection of Virtue, and meriting the most  
eminent Degrees of the Glory and Happi-  
ness of Heaven. And thus it is that Su-  
perstition compleats the Ruin which it  
brings upon the Minds of Men, and secures  
its Triumphs over them, by confirming and  
hardening them in all their Prepossessions,  
Errors, and Corruptions, and shutting them  
up in a State of almost incurable Ignorance  
and Depravity ; not only rendering them  
averse to the Means which are proper to  
deliver them from this State, but making  
Them to glory and rejoice in it, as the most  
excellent and blessed Condition in which  
they can possibly be.

Besides

Besides these pernicious Consequences of SERM.  
Superstition to the Minds and Tempers VII.  
of Men, there are some other very mis-  
chievous Effects of it, which likewise de-  
serve to be noticed. One of these, is, its  
exposing Religion to the Scorn and Con-  
tempt of profane Men. A true and ra-  
tional Piety is certainly a Thing of the  
highest Excellence in itself, and the greatest  
Ornament of every Mind in which it is  
found: But a false Piety, or a superstitious  
Devotion has nothing lovely or engaging in  
it, but must necessarily be distasteful to a  
Man of true Judgment, and always give  
a Handle to Persons of vain and irreligious  
Minds to despise and deride true Religion  
itself, (which such never distinguish from  
its Counterfeit) and to run into the Ex-  
treme of an open Impiety and atheistical  
Conversation, which is the best Security,  
as they imagine, against those extravagant  
Absurdities and shocking Immoralities,  
which, they see so many, under a Colour  
of Sanctity and Devotion, so apt to fall  
into.

Another mischievous Effect of gross Su-  
perstition, is its dishonouring the human  
Nature. As a rational and steady Devotion  
contributes greatly to the Dignity and Im-  
provement

SERM.

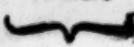
VII.

provement of our Nature, to the purifying, enlivening, and strengthening of our several Powers and Affections; so the Reverse of it, a blind and immoral Superstition, degrades our Nature, and sinks us below our Rank in the Creation, depresses and corrupts those Faculties and Dispositions in us, which when duly cultivated and exerted, are our highest Perfection and Glory, and makes us act so absurdly or wickedly, that we must appear very mean or hateful, in the Eyes of superior Intelligences, and even of all the wiser and better Part of our own Kind.

The last unhappy Consequence of Superstition which I shall mention, is, its depriving Men of their Liberty, and injuring them greatly even in their temporal Interests. It begets such Ignorance and Stupidity, such Lowness and Baseness of Mind in Men, as naturally prepare them for a State of Slavery, and give the greatest Advantages for bringing them into it, which are always laid hold on, and improved against them, till they are effectually oppressed both in Mind and Body, and sunk into the most spiritless, abject, poor, and every way wretched Condition in which Mankind can be conceived to be. Who-

ever



ever have attended to the Rise and Progress SERM.  
of the great Tyrannies, whether spiritual or VII.  
temporal, which have been in the World,   
must be sensible of the Truth of this Fact;  
it being plain that these Tyrannies have  
usually had their firmest Foundation in the  
Ignorance and religious Delusions of Men,  
and that one main Expedient of raising  
them to the Height of arbitrary and op-  
pressive Power, has been the continuing  
their Vassals in a miserable State of Dark-  
ness and Blindness, and inuring them to  
the Practices of an absurd and false De-  
votion.

III. The *Third* Thing proposed, was to  
consider the Reasons, which should make  
us guard against Superstition, and oppose it.  
And this is a Point, which may be dis-  
patched in few Words: For,

*First*, The Reasons of guarding against  
the more gross and flagrant Superstitions,  
must be exceedingly plain and strong, from  
what has been represented under the last  
Head. Whoever considers the fatal Ten-  
dency, and dismal Consequences of such  
Superstitions, if he intends to prevent the  
greatest Destruction from falling upon his  
Mind, and consults the Dignity and Hap-  
piness

SERM. pinefs of his Nature, either in this, or another Life, must fee the absolute Necessity  
VII. of watching against, and withstanding them in himself; and if he has any Compassion and Benevolence, any Desire to save Men from the most deplorable Ruin, both in their spiritual and temporal Interests; if he has any Concern for the Propagation of true Religion and Virtue, and the Prevalence of those Principles and Dispositions, which are of the highest Importance to the Order and Happiness of Society, as well as the Perfection and Felicity of Individuals; he must certainly resist the Growth and Progress of them in the World. Indeed there is hardly any thing which Persons of great Abilities are under stronger Obligations of attempting, than the delivering Men from gross and destructive Superstitions; nor is there any Work more worthy of the most generous and heroick Minds: Whoever contribute to the Advancement of it in any high Degree, are to be ranked among the greatest Benefactors of the World, whose Characters must ever be revered, and shine with a distinguished Glory in the History of Mankind.

*Secondly,* The Reasons of guarding against the lower Instances of Superstition, are likewise

wife very obvious. For, as all Superstition, SERM.  
VII.  
even in that Degree, which is consistent with a general good State of Mind, gives at least a vain Trouble to the Persons under the Power of it, and deprives them of the Pleasure which a more reasonable Exercise of Piety would afford them; as such a Weakness is also a Blemish in their Characters, and furnishes some Pretence to the Adversaries of Religion to condemn it: Several of the same Reasons which oblige Men to oppose the flagrant and most pernicious Kinds of Superstition, hold, for their opposing in a lower Degree, even the most tolerable and harmless Instances of it; especially when it is considered, that it is of the Nature of Superstition to propagate and increase itself, that there is a Danger lest the Poison of it, from a small Beginning, should in Time spread itself through all the Powers of the Soul, one Error and Irregularity leading on to greater Errors and Irregularities, till at last all rational Notions are in a great Measure obliterated, the Affections corrupted, and little remains in the Mind but a gross Blindness and Depravity.

IV. The last general Point, is to lay down the Methods of preventing, or remedying Superstition. From



SERM. From what has been observed above, it  
VII. must be already plain, that the Cure of  
gross and inveterate Superstitions is a Matter of extreme Difficulty; as the Mind is exceedingly stupified and debased by them, and rendered averse to the Means necessary to deliver it from the Power of them. The Prevention of Superstition is much easier than the Remedy of it; and if due Care was taken by those who have the Formation of the Minds of Youth, to instil into them true and worthy Notions of the Supreme Being, and his Government of the World; to accustom them to a sound and impartial Exercise of their Reason on Subjects of Religion, to keep their Sense of moral Good and Evil pure and lively in them, and to put them upon their Guard against the Influence of seducing Passions, there would be but little Reason to complain of the Prevalence of this Evil: But as it is the Unhappiness of the greatest Part of Men, to be either altogether neglected in their Education, and suffered to take up whatever Notions, Tradition, Custom, the Fashion of the Times, or the prevailing Bent of their own Minds suggest to them in Matters of Religion, or to be put under the Care of Persons, who instead of in-

structing

structing them in rational Principles of Pie- SERM.  
ty, give them, either through Ignorance or VII.  
Design, very mistaken and unworthy Views  
of it; it is necessary not only to watch  
against the Beginning and Rise of Super-  
stition, but to check and correct it, if it  
can be done, after it has spread itself among  
Men, which, from the uncultivated and  
perverted State of their Minds, it must be  
expected always in some Degree to do.

The Remedies of Superstition are ea-  
sily prescribed, and if they could be as  
easily applied and used, this Distemper  
would soon be cured and removed. The  
Things chiefly necessary for the Cure of  
Superstition are, 1. The free Use of Rea-  
son, for forming a true Idea of the Deity,  
and the Homage which Mankind naturally  
owe to him; for rejecting all Notions upon  
these Subjects, unworthy of the Divine Na-  
ture, however supported by Tradition, the  
Authority of Ancestors, or of those who  
have had the Name of venerable Guides  
in Religion; and admitting only such as  
are agreeable to the Perfections which the  
Constitution of the Universe clearly points  
out to us in the Author and Governor of  
it, and to the Dispositions and Affections  
which we naturally feel in ourselves upon the  
View

SERM. View and Contemplation of those Perfections. VII. 2. The Taking our Accounts of the positive Duties of religious Worship, enjoined by Christianity, not from the Imaginations, or Systems of any Men, or Parties of Men, but only from the Declarations of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles, who alone were authorized and duly qualified to fix and settle them; so that whatever Forms or Ceremonies may accompany the Performance of these Duties, nothing but what they have declared to belong to the Nature of them, is to be considered by us, as of Divine Institution, and as directly a Matter of Conscience and Religion. 3. The Keeping the Principle of moral Discernment in us, or our natural Conscience of Good and Evil always vigorous and uncorrupted, that it may be according to its Rank in our Constitution, the Light and Guide of Life in us, leading us on in an uniform Course of true Piety and Virtue, prevailing over every false Appearance of Devotion, and controuling all the Desires and Passions, which, at any time, rise up in us, in Opposition to its Dictates and Directions. Lastly, The Standing upon our Guard against the Men who *lie in wait to deceive*; the receiving with great Caution the Instructions which  
may



may be offered to us in Religion, by those SERM.  
VII.  
whose Situation and Circumstances render it probable, that they intend to mislead us into pernicious Errors, for some Ends and Interests of their own; rather than to guide us to the Knowledge of the Truth, for our Benefit and Happiness.

These Directions, if duly observed and practised, would be effectual Means of destroying the Superstition of Men, and securing them against a Relapse into it for the future.

But the Difficulty is to engage those, who are in any great measure infected with Superstition, to make use of the Means necessary for working the Cure of it: And as to this, it is not, perhaps, possible to lay down the Rules which are to be observed in all Cases. Every one who intends so great a Benefit to his Neighbour, as the putting him into the Way of getting rid of inveterate Superstitions, must apply to him in the Methods, which from his Knowledge of the Circumstances of the Person, he judges to be most likely to prove successful. But in general, it seems necessary, for awakening the Minds of Men out of that Lethargy into which gross Superstition throws them, and making them exert their

SERM. Faculties to free themselves from the Power  
VII. of it, to give them some just Impression of  
the Dignity and Importance of the rational  
and moral Powers of our Nature, and the  
strict Obligations we are under to cultivate  
and improve them for the Ends for which  
they were given; particularly for acquiring  
a Knowledge of the Deity, and the Duty  
which we owe immediately to him; to-  
gether with a Sense of the Baseness and  
Ingratitude we are chargeable with, and the  
Misery we bring upon ourselves, when-  
ever we neglect the Cultivation of these  
Powers, or prostitute them to any un-  
worthy Purposes. After this, we may try  
to reason with the Superstitious, upon those  
Instances of their Superstition, of which  
they appear to be least tenacious, and to  
convince them of the Absurdity of them,  
from their Inconsistency with the natural  
Dictates of their own Understandings and  
Consciences, or the plain Declarations of  
Revelation: And if once we can open a  
Passage for any Light to enter into their  
Minds, we may proceed upon this Foun-  
dation to communicate to them greater De-  
grees of it, to bring them on to an Exami-  
nation of other Branches of their Super-  
stition, and an Acknowledgment of their  
Errors;

Errors; and so by Degrees form such a SERM.  
VII.  
Love of Truth and Ingenuity of Temper in them, as will dispose them to go on in reviewing their whole Scheme of Religion, and may in Time be the Means of freeing them entirely from their Delusions. Besides these, there is another general Rule to be observed, in persuading Men to exert their Powers, and to use all proper Means for delivering themselves from Superstition, which is, to treat them with great Gentleness and Kindness; to proceed with them, not in the Way of Haughtiness and Power, but in the Spirit of Meekness and Love; to satisfy them, that what we propose by the Pains we take about them, is not any Interest of our own, but their Good and Happiness; to bear along with them, after the Example of the Divine Author of our Religion, and all the wisest Instructors of Mankind, in such of their Prejudices and Mistakes, as they are extremely fond of, and are consistent with an honest Heart; while we express ourselves with a just Severity against those Instances of Error and Delusion in them, which are destructive of a good State of Mind, and urge them to an impious and wicked Conduct, and which their own Consciences,



SERM. if they are at all to be touched, must be  
VII. soonest alarmed at, upon a true Representation of their evil Nature, and pernicious Tendency.

These, in general, seem to be the most probable Methods of prevailing on the Superstitious, to assert and use the Right which they have, both as Men and Christians, of judging for themselves in Religion, and to do whatever other Things are proper for rescuing their Minds from the Bondage in which they are held; and though they should not be attended with all the Success which is to be desired, yet, if they are effectual, in any Measure, for recovering Men, sunk in Ignorance and Error, to the Exercise of their natural Faculties, for discovering to them any of their grosser and more pernicious Mistakes, and raising in them any rational Sentiments and truly religious Affections, there is still sufficient Reason for continuing them; it being of great Consequence, to throw even but a little Light upon Minds almost wholly benighted, and to render the Service, which Men offer to the Deity, in any Degree reasonable and useful, instead of being altogether absurd, and hurtful both to Themselves and Others.

I shall

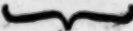
I shall now conclude with a few general SERM.  
Reflections upon this whole Subject. VII.

1. We may see the Necessity of distinguishing Religion from Superstition, that the one may not suffer for the Sake of the other. Nothing has been more injurious to the Cause of Religion, than the confounding it with the Delusions and Extravagancies which have been vended under the Name of it, and have indeed been often contended for with greater Eagerness and Zeal, than the plainest Points of the Gospel, or than the first and most incontestable Principles of moral Piety and Virtue themselves. This is the Thing which has prejudiced Multitudes against Religion, and rendered the Defence of it so burthensome to those of its Advocates, who have not known, or have not cared, to separate the *Wheat from the Chaff*, the pure Principles of natural Piety and Humanity, and the uncorrupted Doctrines and Laws of Christianity, from the absurd Inventions, the contradictory Systems, and the vain or immoral Institutions or Observances of ignorant or wicked Men; and which has likewise given the greatest Occasions of Boasting to *Atheists* and *Infidels*, who have often fancied, or at least, would have the

SERM. World to believe, that they have demolished the whole Structure of natural and revealed Religion, while they have only detected some enthusiastical, or superstitious Dreams and Follies, and combated Things, which are so far from having any Connexion with the Cause of true Religion, that they are irreconcilable to, and subversive of it. It should, therefore, be the Business of all who wish well to Christianity, and intend to prepare the Way for its universal Reception among Men, to present it to the World in its native Purity, distinguishing carefully what really belongs to it, from those human Mixtures and Additions, which have defaced the Beauty of it, and given it an uncouth and ungainly Appearance. It should likewise be the Care of those, who pretend to oppose Religion, if they would merit the Character of judicious and fair Adversaries, to point their Arguments, only against the real Principles and Duties of natural or revealed Religion; against the natural Distinction between moral Good and Evil; against the Existence of a Deity, and any of his essential Attributes, against the Worship of him, with an inward Veneration and Love, as well as external Addresses in Prayers and Praises,



Praises, and an universal Integrity and Goodness in our Conversation in the World ;  
against the Use of a Supernatural Revelation, the Divine Original of Christianity, or any of the Doctrines and Institutions of *Jesus Christ*, in the Simplicity in which they are delivered in the Gospel. These are the Points which should be attacked and overturned by the Adversaries of Religion, before they can succeed in their Designs; and if upon these Subjects, they have any thing to offer, deserving Attention, it becomes us to hear them; which we may very well do, without a Suspicion that the Cause of Religion will suffer in the Issue. But if instead of this, they will content themselves with refuting foolish and idle Fancies, exposing pious Cheats, and declaiming against Priestcraft and other Immoralities, which have been practised under a Pretence of Religion, and after having done so, will boast of Victory over Revelation and all Religion, we need never envy them the Glory of such a Triumph: Every Man of Reflection must see, that Religion is not in the least hurt by them, and that their impotent Attempts against it, only discover their own Want of Sense, or Honesty.

S E R M.  
VII.  


SERM. 2. From what has been said, we may  
VII. learn how to answer a Question, which  
has been debated both in ancient and modern Times, whether *Atheism*, or *Superstition* is the more hurtful Thing to Society? This indeed seems to be a Point of greater Curiosity than Use; because it is certain that both *Atheism* and *Superstition* are very bad Things, and it is no sort of Excuse for the One, to say that the Other is worse. However, as the Adversaries of Religion have been fond of determining the Question in favour of *Atheism*, imagining that from this Decision they can draw some Advantages to their Cause; it will not be amiss, upon this Occasion, briefly to point out the true Answer of the Question, and to shew what Consequences are to be deduced from it. For answering the Question, we must consider, as was observed above, that *Superstition* is an equivocal Word, and that the Things signified by it, are of different Kinds and Degrees. Now the grossest Kinds and Instances of *Superstition*, which universally corrupt the Consciences and natural Affections of Men, and under the Appearance of Devotion, prompt them to the most horrid Acts of Injustice and Inhumanity, are plainly more pernicious than  
Atheism,

Atheism, which, though it produces a most SERM.  
terrible Devastation in the Mind, and leaves VII.  
it, if it has any Reflection, in the most  
comfortless State ; yet, seems not to have any  
positive Influence for invenoming the Spirits  
of Men, and urging them to Barbarity and  
Cruelty against one another. But as for that  
sort of Superstition, which consists only in  
an undue Zeal for Speculations and Opini-  
ons, and an unnecessary Punctuality about  
the Forms and Circumstances of Devotion,  
and the like ; but which, at the same time,  
leaves Room for the Belief of all the great  
Principles of Religion, and the Practice of  
the moral Duties of Life ; This, though it  
indeed allays the good Influence of the  
Principles of Religion, and in some Degree  
sours the Tempers of Men, making them  
both more uneasy in Themselves, and more  
disagreeable to Others, than otherwise they  
would be ; yet is, beyond all Comparison,  
preferable to Atheism ; it being infinitely  
better for the World, that Men should live  
under even the lower Degrees of the Power  
of true Religion, rather than that they  
should feel nothing of the Force of it, and  
be left entirely to the Conduct of their na-  
tural Principles and Passions, which, in that  
disordered and corrupted State of Mind,  
which settled Atheism, or Irreligion, pre-  
supposes,



SERM. supposes, will certainly lead them into in-  
VII. numerable Acts of Vice and Wickedness.

Now from this Resolution of the Case, it is plain, that the only Conclusions that can be justly drawn are these; that neither Atheism, nor Superstition is to be in the least favourably thought of, but that both are to be guarded against by Mankind, with an Earnestness proportionable to the evil Consequences of them; that Atheism, producing uniformly the most mischievous Effects, as it releases Men from those Obligations and Restraints which are of the greatest Use for the good Conduct of Life, and throws the most dismal Gloom over all human Affairs, is ever to be opposed with the most vigorous and steady Zeal; that the immoral and inhuman Superstitions, which supplant Virtue, and extinguish the social Affections of Men, and fill them with destructive Rage and Fury, are to be opposed still, if it be possible, with a greater Zeal; and that even the most innocent Instances of Superstition are to be withstood, though with a due Indulgence to human Infirmities, on account of their bad Influence on the Tempers of Men, and the Quiet of their Minds; and that every one should endeavour to establish himself in those

those rational Principles of Piety, which SERM.  
are equally remote from Irreligion, and a VII.  
false Devotion, and which will have the  
most excellent Effect upon his own Virtue  
and Happiness, as well as the Order and  
Peace of Society.

3. Lastly, We may here take Notice of  
the Advantages of the *Protestant* Religion,  
compared with that professed in the Church  
of *Rome*, with respect to its Tendency to  
Superstition. That many who have made  
Profession of the *Reformed* Religion, have  
been deeply tinctured with Superstition, is  
a Matter not to be denied; but this has  
been the Fault of the Men, and not of  
their Religion; no Part of which gives the  
least Countenance or Encouragement to such  
an Infirmary: On the contrary, the essential  
Principles of *Protestantism*, concerning the  
Right and Duty of every Man, to use his  
own Understanding in judging of Religion;  
to trace back the Principles of natural Re-  
ligion to the clear Maxims of Reason in  
which they are founded, and to *search the*  
*Scriptures* for the additional Light which  
they have thrown upon any of these Prin-  
ciples, and for ascertaining the Doctrines  
and Precepts of pure Revelation; and to  
receive nothing as a Part of his Religion  
which

SERM. supposes, will certainly lead them into in-  
VII. numerable Acts of Vice and Wickedness.

Now from this Resolution of the Case, it is plain, that the only Conclusions that can be justly drawn are these; that neither Atheism, nor Superstition is to be in the least favourably thought of, but that both are to be guarded against by Mankind, with an Earnestness proportionable to the evil Consequences of them; that Atheism, producing uniformly the most mischievous Effects, as it releases Men from those Obligations and Restraints which are of the greatest Use for the good Conduct of Life, and throws the most dismal Gloom over all human Affairs, is ever to be opposed with the most vigorous and steady Zeal; that the immoral and inhuman Superstitions, which supplant Virtue, and extinguish the social Affections of Men, and fill them with destructive Rage and Fury, are to be opposed still, if it be possible, with a greater Zeal; and that even the most innocent Instances of Superstition are to be withstood, though with a due Indulgence to human Infirmities, on account of their bad Influence on the Tempers of Men, and the Quiet of their Minds; and that every one should endeavour to establish himself in those



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SERM. which is not supported by the Authority of  
VII. God, discovered by the Light of Nature,  
or the Declarations of his Word; these Principles, I say, which lie at the Foundation of the *Protestant* Cause, are the very best Preservatives against Superstition, and, if uniformly pursued and put in Practice, would effectually banish it from among Men. The Case is very different in the Church of *Rome*, where there is not only the grossest Superstition in Practice, but where the Doctrines and Principles of their Religion are most evidently calculated, for extinguishing the Light both of Reason and Revelation, for shutting up the Minds of Men in the most dismal Ignorance and Darkness, and the most absolute Submission to the Authority of Persons, who, according to the Exigencies of their Affairs, can, under a Mask of Piety, either busy them with unmanly Observances, uneasy and burthenome to themselves; or fire them with a diabolical Rage against others, the Consequences of which have often been most terribly felt in many Parts of the World: So that the very Fountain of their Devotion is corrupted, *the Light that is in them is Darkness*, and their Religion itself a Mass of Absurdity and Wickedness, which is certainly

tainly the most dreadful Misery that can SERM.  
 befall Mankind. It becomes us, therefore, VII.  
 to have a due Sense of the Blessings which  
 we enjoy, by being educated and instructed  
 in the Principles of the *Protestant* Religion  
 or of *Reformed* Christianity, by which we  
 are delivered from the most deplorable Cor-  
 ruptions, and the most cruel Bondage, and  
 put into the Way, if we be not wanting to  
 ourselves, of keeping clear of all gross Er-  
 rors and Superstitions, of worshipping God  
 with a rational and manly Piety, and *serv-* Luke i.  
*ing him, without Fear, in Holiness and* 74, 75.  
*Righteousness before him, all the Days of*  
*our Life*: And from a just Consideration  
 of the Value of these Blessings, let us be  
 ever zealous, both to secure them to our-  
 selves, and to make others Partakers of  
 them; and above all, let us be careful to  
 adorn our Profession with a proportionable  
 Behaviour, *to shew out of a good Conversa-* Jam. iii.  
*tion our Works with Meekness of Wisdom;* 13.  
 to guard against every Approach towards  
 the *earthly, sensual, and devilish* Spirit of ver. 15.  
 false and corrupt Religions; and to make  
 it plain that we are governed by the Dic-  
 tates of *the Wisdom that is from above,* ver. 17.  
*which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle,*  
*and easy to be entreated; full of Mercy and*  
*good Fruits, without Partiality, and with-*  
*out Hypocrisy.*



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## SERMON VIII.

The moral Value and Worth of  
Faith considered, and particu-  
larly exemplified in the Belief  
of our Saviour's Resurrection.

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JOHN XX. 29.

*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet  
have believed.*

SERM.  
VIII.

Preached  
on *Easter*  
Sunday,  
1741.

THE Occasion of these Words was  
this: St. *Thomas*, one of the Apo-  
stles, happened to be absent, when  
our Saviour first appeared to his Disciples  
in a Body after his Resurrection, and being  
afterwards informed by them that they had  
seen the Lord, he would not, upon their  
Report, assent to a Thing which he thought  
so improbable as the Resurrection of our  
Saviour, and insisted upon his having a  
very particular Proof of it, before he would  
believe it. Our Lord, in great Condescen-  
sion

fion to his Weakness, soon afterwards, gave SERM.  
him in the Presence of the other Apostles, VIII.

that Proof of his Resurrection which he  
desired; upon which, *Thomas* professing  
his Conviction and Belief of it, our Saviour  
replied, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me  
thou hast believed; blessed are they that have  
not seen, and yet have believed;* as if he had  
said to him, "You have been too scrupu-  
" lous in not admitting the Truth of my  
" Resurrection upon the credible Testi-  
" mony of my Disciples concerning it, and  
" in believing it only after you had such a  
" sensible Demonstration of it, as left no  
" Room for any Doubt or Inquiry, and ir-  
" resistibly forced your Assent: Those Per-  
" sons, I must tell you, will discover a  
" more happy and commendable Temper,  
" who will believe my Resurrection, upon  
" such an Evidence of it as lays a just  
" Foundation for a rational Assent, though  
" it should not be so convincing and satis-  
" factory to the Mind as the sensible Proof  
" which you have had of this Fact, must  
" necessarily be."

Now as we all are (as all who have gone  
before us in the Profession of Christianity,  
since the Time that our Saviour ceased to  
be visible upon Earth, have also been) in  
the

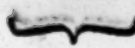
SERM. the Case of the Persons whom our Saviour  
VIII. here refers to, who must believe his Resur-  
rection without having had a sensible Proof  
of it, we may have some Satisfaction in re-  
flecting, that though we have not that clear  
and strong Evidence to support our Belief  
of this Article of our Religion, which the  
Apostles and other Eye-witnesses of the  
Fact had to support theirs, yet our Faith of  
it is not the less valuable for the want of  
such Evidence, but has indeed a greater  
Degree of Worth and Excellence in it, as  
it is the Result of a purely rational and fair  
Inquiry. At the same Time, as this will  
appear to be a great Paradox to some, who  
will be so far from allowing the Belief of  
such an extraordinary Fact, as the Resur-  
rection of a Person from the Dead, upon  
any Report or Relation concerning it, to  
be a Thing any way meritorious or com-  
mendable, that they will look upon it as a  
sure Argument of Ignorance, Credulity, and  
Enthusiasm, it will be necessary to inquire  
into the Reasons of this Assertion of our  
Saviour, or to shew how our Belief of his  
Resurrection arising from a free and candid  
Examination of the rational Proofs of it,  
is really a Thing valuable in itself, and pre-  
ferable to the Faith which the Apostles had  
of



of it, which was founded upon the Infor-  
mation of their Senses. This I shall first  
do, and then proceed to some important  
Observations and Reflections which this  
Subject will afford us. SERM.  
VIII.

In order to see how our Belief of the Re-  
surrection of our Saviour, arising from a  
free and impartial Examination of the ra-  
tional Proofs of it, is a Thing truly valuable  
and preferable to the Belief which the Apo-  
stles received of it from the Information of  
their Senses, we must consider a little the  
general Nature of Faith, and from whence  
the Worth of it is derived. Now Faith in  
the most strict Sense is taken for the  
Assent which we give to Facts or Proposi-  
tions, upon such Testimony concerning  
them, as, after a deliberate and fair Exa-  
mination, appears to be credible: And in a  
more general and popular Sense, it fre-  
quently signifies our Assent to Facts which  
we are assured of from the Perceptions of  
our Senses and our own Experience, as  
well as to Propositions which we know to  
be true by the Use of our intelligent and  
rational Faculties. Now it is certain that  
the Assent of the Understanding, whether  
it be founded upon the immediate Percep-  
tions of the Senses, or upon a clear rational  
Q Evidence,

SERM. Evidence, is in its own Nature indifferent ;

VIII.  it; procuring a Man neither Approbation, nor Dislike from any Observers. Indeed this is a Thing which does not depend on the Determination of our Wills, any more than the flowing of our Blood, the Digestion of our Food, or any of the most necessary Motions in our Bodies, and is therefore no more to be regarded in any moral Account and Estimation, than these other Things are. The Virtue of Faith, therefore, is not derived from the Assent which the Mind must always give, according to the Degree of Evidence which is laid before it: And if there was nothing more included in the Notion of Faith than this Assent, it would be very vain to make an Inquiry concerning the moral Worth or Value of it at all. But Faith is a complex Thing, which, besides the Assent of the Understanding, which finishes and compleats it, and is therefore principally taken Notice of in the Definitions usually given of it, comprehends several moral Dispositions; such as Probity and Diligence in searching for the Truth; a Docility of Mind, and an Openness to Conviction; a humble Dependence on God the Fountain  
of

of Light and Truth, for directing us in our SERM.  
Inquiries, and a submissive and obedient VI.  
Temper towards Him. These are Dispo-  
sitions which the Imperfection of our Un-  
derstanding, the Weakness of our Reason,  
and the many Difficulties, which, from se-  
veral Causes, we meet with in the Investi-  
gation of Truth, render necessary to be put  
in Practice by us, for obtaining such Evi-  
dence as can be the Foundation of a ratio-  
nal Assent: They are therefore to be confi-  
dered as the Principles of a true Faith, and  
are indeed the Things which in a moral  
Account make it to be of Worth and Im-  
portance. Besides this, every Man of Re-  
flection must know the close Connexion  
which Truth has with the Virtue and Hap-  
piness of Mankind: A sincere Love of it  
therefore, which makes us unprejudiced  
and impartial, as well as attentive and di-  
ligent in acquiring the Knowledge of it,  
must be a very amiable and commendable  
Disposition. Indeed Mankind naturally ap-  
prove of this Quality, and esteem it as an  
Argument of a generous and noble Mind.  
This was the Foundation of the Praise  
which the sacred Historian bestowed upon  
the *Jews of Berea*, and the Thing which Acts xvii.  
rendered their Belief of the Gospel a wor-<sup>11.</sup>



SERM. thy and manly A&t. On the other Hand,  
 VIII. the want of a sincere Love of Truth, of a  
 truly inquisitive and teachable Disposition  
 of Mind; or, which is the same Thing,  
 the refusing to examine Principles and Doc-  
 trines of great Importance, when fairly pro-  
 posed, and to attend to the Evidence which  
 supports them, is what renders the Infide-  
 lity of Men criminal, and the Ground of  
 those severe Threatenings which are de-  
 nounced against it in several Places of the  
 New Testament. Thus after our Saviour  
 had spoken to the *Jews as never Man spake,*  
 and *had done among them the Works that no*  
*other Man ever did,* the Foot upon which  
 he put their Condemnation for *not believ-*  
*ing in him* was this, that *Light had come*  
*into the Wórlđ, and Men loved Darknes*  
*rather than Light, because their Deeds were*  
*evil.* And when St. Paul told the *Theffa-*  
*lonians* that *some would be damned who be-*  
*lieved not the Truth,* he at the same Time  
 assigned this Reason for it, because *they re-*  
*ceived not the Love of the Truth, but had*  
*Pleasure in Unrighteousness.*

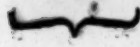
Joh. iii.  
19.

2 Theff. ii.  
10, 12.

Now from this general Account of the  
 Nature and Excellence of Faith, we may  
 easily see how our Belief of the Resurrec-  
 tion of our Saviour, proceeding from a free  
 and

and impartial Inquiry into the rational Evi-  
dences of it, is really valuable, and prefer-  
able to the Belief which the Apostles re-  
ceived of it from the Testimony of their  
Senses. For Faith being an Assent upon  
convincing Evidence, and the Worth of it,  
in a moral Consideration, arising from that  
Love of Truth, and that impartial and di-  
ligent Use of our intelligent and reasonable  
Powers, which are presupposed or included  
in a rational Assent, it is plain that our Be-  
lief of the Resurrection of our Lord, must  
be worthy and commendable, in propor-  
tion to the Degrees of those good Qualities  
which it comprehends, and must, in point  
of Excellence, exceed the Belief which the  
Apostles had of this Fact, as far as it has  
more of Ingenuity, and of a fair and gene-  
rous Exercise of Reason, than their Faith  
of the Fact included. The Apostles had  
the Testimony not only of one, but of se-  
veral of their Senses, to assure them of the  
Reality of our Saviour's Resurrection: They  
saw him, they touched and handled him,  
and heard him discourse after he rose from  
the Dead. They, therefore, had a Proof  
of his Resurrection which prevented In-  
quiry and the Exercise of Reason, and vio-  
lently extorted their Assent; so that there

SERM.  
VIII.

SERM. could be but little Virtue in their Belief of  
VIII.  this Fact upon such strong and overbearing  
Evidence. But the Evidence upon which  
our Faith of the Resurrection of our Lord  
depends, is much inferior in Clearness and  
Force to the Proof which the Apostles had  
of it : Though it will prove abundantly sa-  
tisfactory to Those who attentively and im-  
partially examine it, yet it does not imme-  
diately command our Assent, but leaves  
room for Consideration, and the Use of  
our intelligent Powers, and for our exerci-  
sing a Love of Truth, and those other good  
Dispositions, which always enter into the  
Notion of Faith considered as a moral Vir-  
tue. This will appear by considering what  
the Evidence is, upon which we can ratio-  
nally believe the Resurrection of our Sa-  
viour. Now this is, in general, credible  
Testimony. It is plain that Testimony is  
the only Evidence which we can have of  
any Facts, of which we have not an im-  
mediate personal Knowledge, nor any ra-  
tional Proof or Presumption from the Na-  
tures and Connexions of Things, and that  
This, though it is not the highest Principle  
or Ground of Assent to the human Mind,  
yet is a natural and just one ; we being  
so formed, that we rely upon Testimony,  
when



when it appears credible, securely and SERM.  
VIII.  
without Hesitation, though the Conviction  
which it affords, is not equal to That, which  
we receive, either from the immediate Re-  
port of our Senses, or from Demonstration.  
But as we may be easily misled, or de-  
ceived in the Assent which we give upon  
this Foundation, whoever acts wisely and  
becomingly, will take Care, at least in the  
Case of all extraordinary and important  
Facts proposed to his Belief, that he goes  
upon a sure or reasonable Ground, before  
he admits and believes them. Now the  
Resurrection of our Saviour being a Fact  
of this Sort, if we would give a rational  
Assent to it, we must first satisfy ourselves  
as to the Credibility of the Report or Tes-  
timony upon which we admit it. And in  
obtaining Satisfaction in this Matter, it will  
be proper to proceed by some such Steps  
as these.

First, To consider whether the Fact it-  
self of our Saviour's Resurrection be a Thing  
possible, which it seems some both of the  
ancient and modern Adversaries of Christia-  
nity have, according to the Principles of  
their Philosophy, alledged it not to be. If  
this should prove to be the Case, all Inqui-  
ries about the Evidences of our Lord's Re-

SERM. resurrection will be superseded, it being cer-  
 VIII. tain that no positive Testimonies can ren-  
 der a Fact credible, which in the very No-  
 tion of it is contradictory or impossible.  
 This however is a Point which will require  
 no great Discussion from Persons, who ar-  
 gue, not from fictitious Hypotheses, but  
 from the Principles of Common Sense, Ex-  
 perience, and Analogy: Such must soon  
 conclude that the Resurrection of our Sa-  
 viour, however an extraordinary Effect of  
 the Divine Power, yet by no Means im-  
 plies an Absurdity or Impossibility; there  
 being indeed nothing more hard to be con-  
 ceived in it, than in the Bodies and Souls  
 of Men being at first formed and united,  
 and put into that regular Method of Inter-  
 course, which is necessary to the Perform-  
 ance of the several Functions of Life.

In the next Place, it will be proper to  
 inquire whether any End, worthy of the  
 Divine Interposition, was to be answered  
 by such an Event as the Resurrection of our  
 Saviour. As it is not at all probable that  
 the Governor of the World would inter-  
 pose with a miraculous Exertion of his  
 Power, but for promoting some very valu-  
 able Purpose to be perceived by Those, for  
 whose Benefit his Power is so extraordina-  
 rily

rily exerted, it must always be of Use in SERM.  
examining the Evidence of Miracles alledg- VIII.  
ed to be wrought by God, to consider whe-  
ther any End, deserving an extraordinary  
Interposition of the Deity, is to be served  
by them. The Perception of such an End  
must take off the Prejudices which are so  
apt to arise in the Mind against such un-  
common and unusual Operations, and faci-  
litate our Belief of them upon proper Evi-  
dence being laid before us of their Truth  
and Reality. Now whoever inquires whe-  
ther any Purpose, worthy of an extraordi-  
nary Exertion of the Divine Power, was to  
be brought about by the Resurrection of  
our Lord, will find that there are two Pur-  
poses, among others, mentioned in the New  
Testament, as effected by the Resurrection  
of our Saviour, which are evidently of this  
Sort. The first is, the *declaring him*, as  
St. Paul speaks, *to be the Son of God*, or the Rom. i. 5.  
Justifying his Claims and Pretensions, the  
Giving him Authority as a Teacher and  
Lawgiver instructed and commissioned by  
God, and the attesting solemnly the Truth  
and Divine Institution of his Religion. The  
other is, the giving the World a clear and  
sensible Proof of a future State, and *assur-* 1 Cor. xv.  
*ing to all good Christians a glorious Resur-* 20--23.  
*rection*



SERM. *rection to immortal Life.* It is very plain  
VIII. that the Resurrection of our Saviour, sup-  
posing it to be true, is an Event admirably calculated for serving both these Purposes; and it must be as plain to any who know the State of the World before the Coming of our Saviour, and how much the Generality of Men stood in need of an authoritative Instruction in the Doctrines and Duties of Religion, and particularly in the great Doctrine of a future State, that the accomplishing these Ends, even by a miraculous Interposition, was a Thing highly worthy of the most gracious Parent and Governor of Mankind.

After having thus satisfied ourselves as to the Possibility of our Saviour's Resurrection, and likewise as to what may be called the Expediency of it, we must then take the positive Testimony or Report, upon which our Belief of this Fact depends, into Consideration; and in examining the Credibility or Truth of this, there are two Things which will naturally require our Attention: 1. The Qualifications of the Witnesses who delivered this Testimony. 2. The Conveyance of their Testimony down to us,

As

As for the *first* Particular, the Qualifica-  
tions of the Witnesses of our Lord's Resur-  
rection. These are reducible to two Heads: SERM.  
VIII.  
Their Information as to the Fact, of which  
they gave Testimony; and their Integrity  
in declaring their real Sense and Judgment  
concerning it.

As to the Information of the Apostles,  
the chosen Witnesses of our Saviour's Re-  
surrection, touching the Fact of which they  
give Testimony: This is a Thing about  
which we must very easily be satisfied. For  
the Resurrection of our Lord having been  
a plain Object of Sense, and the Apostles  
having had the Evidence of several of their  
Senses, not only at one Time, and in a  
transient Way, but very frequently and for  
a considerable Time at once, to convince  
them that the very Person, whose Follow-  
ers they had been before his Death, was  
restored to Life after they had known him  
to be dead, unless it can be said that they  
had no Use of their Senses and Understand-  
ing, but were perfect Visionaries and En-  
thusiasts, which, though it has been some-  
times insinuated, is evidently a most inju-  
rious and false Suggestion, it must be al-  
lowed that they were very fully assured of  
the Fact of which they make Report, and  
that

SERM. that it is most absurd to suppose them mis-  
VIII. taken in their Judgment of it.

And as to their Integrity in declaring their real Sense and Conviction concerning the Resurrection of our Lord: This can hardly be called in question by any who consider the strong Proofs which they gave of their Disinterestedness and Honesty, not only by the general Course of an unblameable and virtuous Conversation, but by publishing this Fact at the Command of our Saviour, and from a Sense of the Duty which they owed to him, though they saw that their doing so would deprive them of all the Comforts of the World, and draw upon them the greatest Misfortunes and Calamities that could befall them in Life; by publishing it in the most open manner, upon the Spot where it had happened, and before the Men who had unjustly put our Saviour to Death, who had the greatest Inclination and Ability to have detected the Cheat, and exposed them as Impostors if their Report had not been evidently true; by continuing to assert the Resurrection of our Lord, after very grievous Sufferings had actually befallen them for doing it; and by laying down their Lives, as at least they generally did, for a farther Confirmation



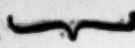
tion of their Testimony, That the Apo-  
stles gave these Evidences of their Integrity  
in publishing this Fact of our Saviour's Re-  
surrection, appears not only from the His-  
tory of the Gospel, but from all the Ac-  
counts which any Writers have given us of  
them; and these are indeed such Evidences  
of their Sincerity, as must, with Men who  
have any Knowledge of human Nature, put  
it beyond all Doubt: Their Conduct in this  
Affair, we may venture to say, is never ra-  
tionally to be accounted for upon any Sup-  
position but this, that they were fully con-  
vinced that what they asserted was true,  
and that it was the Will of God that they  
should declare it to the World.

And what is still the highest Justification  
of the Apostles, and the clearest Proof of  
their Truth and Integrity in publishing the  
Resurrection of our Saviour, is their having  
had their Report of it confirmed by the  
Testimony of God himself, who *bore them* Heb. ii. 4.  
*Witness with Signs and Wonders, and with  
diverse Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost.*  
That the Apostles were inspired and assisted  
with an extraordinary Divine Spirit in ex-  
ecuting their Office as the Witnesses and  
Ministers of Christ, is a Point beyond Dis-  
pute, not only from its being very particu-  
larly

SERM.  
VIII.

SERM. larly related in the New Testament, but  
VIII. from its being related in it, concerning  
 some of them, in such a Manner, that the Truth of it must have been denied, or at least brought into Debate, which yet it never appears to have been, if the Fact had not been altogether certain and incontestable; and from the Monuments which still remain of such Inspiration, in those Prophecies which we meet with in their Writings, concerning the State of Things under the Dispensation of Christianity, which have been in part already fulfilled, and are gradually obtaining, as may be evident to the Observation of every Man, a more full and compleat Accomplishment. And as the extraordinary Gifts with which the Apostles were endowed, were of the greatest Use to them in carrying on the Business in which they were employed, so they are the strongest Evidence of their Authority, and of the Truth of the Accounts which they gave both of the Miracles and Doctrine of our Saviour; it being by no means reconcileable to our Notions of the Divine Attributes, to suppose that God would give such great Credentials, as the miraculous Gifts of the *Holy Spirit*, to Persons concerned in a Deceit or Imposture.

As

As for the Conveyance of the Testimony S E R M.  
of the Apostles concerning the Resurrection VIII.  
of our Saviour (of which we have seen that )  
they were very competent and well qualified  
Witnesses) down to us, which is the *second*  
Point to be considered by us in examining  
the Credibility of this Testimony: This  
may be made out from the following Con-  
siderations. The Testimony of the Apostles  
concerning this Fact was put into Writing  
by some of themselves, and by some  
others who were under their immediate  
Direction. This appears from the express  
Assertions of the most ancient Christian  
Writers, as well as the constant uncon-  
trouled Tradition of Christians in all Ages,  
and could never be denied by the most con-  
siderable of their Adversaries: The Ori-  
ginals of the Apostles and Evangelists, were  
preserved for a long Time in some Christian  
Churches; Copies of them were soon dis-  
persed through all Parts of the World, and  
have from Time to Time been multiplied,  
according as the Necessities of Christians  
required: Translations of them were early  
made into various Languages: These Books  
have all along been the Special Care of  
Christians, and were publickly recited in  
their religious Assemblies; and Passages  
contain-



SERM. containing the most material Facts and

VIII. Doctrines recorded in them, have been

quoted from them, by an infinite Number of Authors, from the Days of the Apostles to this Time. These Considerations, to omit several others, are sufficient to shew us, that the Evangelical Writings must be, in the main, very pure and uncorrupted; and that whatever Mistakes may have been occasioned in them, through the Negligence or Unskilfulness of Transcribers, yet no such gross Corruptions could have happened in them, as can affect the Truth of the Whole, or make us call in Question the principal Facts in them, upon which the Certainty of the Christian Religion depends. We have therefore, very good Reason to think, that the Testimony of the Apostles, recorded in the History of the Gospel, concerning the Resurrection of our Saviour, has been very truly and faithfully transmitted to us. This, to speak very moderately, can no more be doubted by us, than that the Testimony of *Cæsar*, concerning his own most remarkable Transactions, has been truly conveyed to us in his *Commentaries*; or that the Testimony of any ancient Historians of the most unquestioned Authority, has been faithfully delivered to us in their Writings,

Writings, about any of the most important SERM.  
Affairs, of which, they tell us, that they VIII.  
Themselves were the Witnesses and Spec-  
tators \*.

In this, or in some such Manner, it will be necessary for us to proceed in satisfying ourselves as to the Validity of the Evidence, or the Credibility of the Testimony, upon which we admit the Truth of our Saviour's Resurrection, if we would entertain a rational

\* If any should object against This, as some have done, that the Account given in the New Testament of the Resurrection of *Christ*, is in several Particulars inconsistent and contradictory, and that therefore the Whole of it may be looked upon as fabulous; if any, I say, should object thus, it may be asked of the Objector, in what Instances does the Inconsistency of this Account appear? Is there any Contradiction between the sacred Historians, as to the Fact itself, of our Saviour's Resurrection? Do they not all agree in declaring that he really died, and rose again from the Dead? Do any of them deny that the Apostles were the Witnesses of these Things, and that they testified them with the greatest Assurance to the World. In these Points it cannot possibly be said, that they have contradicted one another: And if after this, there should be some Difference, or even an Inconsistency in their Relations of some Circumstances, which have no necessary Connexion with these main Facts, yet this would be no sufficient Foundation for disbelieving these Facts, with any who consider, that Testimonies are every Day admitted, in Causes of great Importance, and in Places where the strictest Regard is had to the Truth of Evidence, when they are clear and consistent in all material Facts and Circumstances, though they vary in some trifling Particulars. Allowing then that it were impossible to reconcile the Accounts, which the Authors of the Gospel-History have given us of some minute Circumstances relating to the Resurrection of our Saviour, such as the Number of Angels who gave the first Notice of it, the Posture in which they appeared to the Women who went to the Sepulchre,

SERM. tional Belief of this Fact. And now in  
 VIII. this Inquiry it is plain, that though we  
 meet with such a Proof of our Lord's Resurrection, as may be sufficiently convincing to a serious and attentive Mind, yet is it not so clear and strong as to prevent Consideration and Reflection; but that in Order to our discerning the Force of it, we must use our Reason impartially, and weigh fairly the several Particulars which concur to give Credit to the Testimony of the Apostles in this Case; that we must have an Ingenuity of Temper and a Love of Truth, which will on the one Hand make us careful not  
 to

pulchre, the Order in which the Disciples came to know that their Master was Risen, and perhaps some other Things of no greater Moment; yet this would not affect the Credibility of our Lord's Resurrection itself, in asserting which we find that these Historians are perfectly harmonious and consistent. But there is no Necessity for making this Concession; for there is no such Inconsistency as is pretended in the Accounts which the Sacred Writers have given us even of these smaller Circumstances. It would be too tedious on this Occasion to consider particularly the Objections which have been raised against them on this Head. But it is certain that their whole Relation of our Saviour's Resurrection, and all the Circumstances of it may be made consistent, only by allowing them to speak of different Times, or different Particulars, where there is a seeming Contradiction between them, which may be fairly allowed from the Series of their Narrations, and the like of which is frequently allowed for removing Inconsistencies, or Difficulties, out of several of the ancient Writers.

*Since the Writing the above Note, a full and accurate Reconciliation has been made of all these pretended Inconsistencies, in the excellent Observations of G. West, Esq; See likewise Dr. Sykes's Essay on the Truth of the Christian Religion.*



to be deceived, and on the other free us SERM.  
from all vicious Prejudices, and leave us VIII.  
open to Conviction, and determine us to  
acquiesce in a truly rational Evidence of the  
Fact, however it is not so apparent and  
cogent as to gain the universal Assent of  
Mankind, or to silence all Cavils, and all  
Contradiction. Here then we have a full  
Justification of our Saviour's Assertion in  
the Text, and see the Reason of his pre-  
ferring our Belief of the Article of his Re-  
surrection, to the Belief which his Apostles  
had of it; because our Faith of it is a free  
and generous Act, the Result of an in-  
genuous and manly Exercise of our reaso-  
nable Powers, including such Principles in  
it as properly constitute it a moral Virtue :  
Whereas the Faith of the Apostles in this  
Point, was the Effect of Necessity, and not  
of Choice, a Thing forced upon them by  
the clear and immediate Perceptions of their  
Senses, which implied nothing of a liberal  
and ingenuous Disposition, and could not  
be of any Value in a moral Computation.  
In another Respect, indeed, the Faith of the  
Apostles concerning the Resurrection, and  
the other Miracles of our Saviour, had a  
great Advantage above Our's, as it was  
more firmly founded, and therefore more

SERM. likely to be a lively and effectual Principle  
VIII. of good Practice in them ; but in regard to  
the Morality or Virtue of their believing  
the Resurrection and other Miracles of our  
Lord, and our believing these Things, our  
Faith plainly deserves the Preference, and  
has an Advantage which Their's, in the  
Nature of Things, could not have.

I shall now conclude, with some useful Remarks and Reflections upon this Subject.

1. It may be proper briefly to observe, that there is here no Foundation for the Doctrine advanced by some Enthusiasts and Impostors, of the Duty or Necessity of believing without, and against Evidence ; or of believing Things unintelligible and incomprehensible, and even contradictory and impossible. They are plainly two very different Things, to say, that we are to believe Facts and Propositions upon such a rational Evidence, as is sufficient, according to the Constitution of our Nature, to determine our assent to them, though it is not so clear and strong as the Evidence upon which we believe some other Facts and Propositions, which are the Objects of Sense, or capable of Demonstration ; and to say, that we are to admit the Belief of Things,

Things, which have no Evidence in Reason at all to support them, of which we can have no Notions and Perceptions, or which we see to be repugnant to the clearest Perceptions and Dictates of our Understandings. The first is what our Saviour has required and commended in his Disciples, and is indeed the Result of a manly and becoming Use of our rational Powers: The other is a Thing which subverts Religion and exposes it to Contempt, which blinds the Guide, and extinguishes the Light of Life in us, which lays Mankind open to all Deceits, and involves them in a most dismal State of Darkness and Ignorance, Superstition and Corruption.

2. We may see that there is no Reason for charging Men with Weakness and Credulity, for believing the Resurrection, and other extraordinary Facts related to have been done by our Saviour, in the History of the Gospel. Though among the great Numbers who make Profession of the Gospel, it can hardly be doubted but that there are always many who believe these Facts implicitly, or upon no other Foundation than the Authority of their Instructors and Guides in Religion; yet to charge all, without Distinction, who admit the Truth of them, with Weakness and Prejudice,



SERM. Enthusiasm, and implicit Faith, purely for  
VIII. their doing so, is utterly unjustifiable. For  
though the Evidence on which our Faith  
of these Facts depends, after a serious and  
rational Enquiry into the Truth of them,  
is not the highest kind of Evidence with  
which we are acquainted, which indeed in  
the Nature of Things it is impossible it  
should be, yet it is by no means precarious  
or insufficient, and perhaps never was, nor  
can, if fully and clearly proposed, be re-  
jected, or disregarded by any Man, with-  
out some Negligence, or Unfairness in the  
Conduct of his Understanding. It is there-  
fore unjust and presumptuous in the Ad-  
versaries of Christianity to represent the  
Friends and Professors of it, as universally  
labouring under Prepossession and Preju-  
dice, Credulity, and enthusiastick Notions,  
for admitting as Articles of their Faith, the  
Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, and the other  
miraculous Facts which attest the Truth  
and Divinity of his Religion; and to ar-  
rogate to themselves the Honour of being  
the Men of free Minds and strong Judg-  
ments, on Account of their Infidelity as to  
these Points. After all this insolent Con-  
tempt of their Neighbours, and vain Boast-  
ing of their own Acuteness, if Judgment

were to be given between them and the SERM.  
Persons, who, upon a fair Inquiry, believe VIII.  
the Resurrection, and the other Miracles of  
our Saviour, only as to the Point of good  
Sense and Soundness of Understanding, by  
any who are acquainted with the Nature  
and Strength of Evidence, and the esta-  
blished Grounds on which the human Mind  
gives its Assent, and who at the same Time  
pronounced Sentence uprightly, the Advan-  
tage would certainly be declared to be on  
the Side of Believers.

3. We may here see what Judgment or  
Account is to be made of the Incredulity  
of Men, as to the Resurrection and other  
miraculous Works of our Saviour. The  
Cause of it is not any want of a rational  
Evidence to support these Facts: Our Lord  
certainly was no Friend to an enthusiastick  
or implicit Belief; he would never have  
mentioned it as a commendable or praise-  
worthy Thing in his Disciples, in all the  
future Ages of the World, to believe his  
Resurrection, (and the Case is much the  
same as to his other Miracles) if he had  
not known, as we find it in Fact to be  
true, that those who have the Proofs of it  
fairly laid before them would, upon an im-  
partial and diligent Examination of them,

SERM. have a reasonable Foundation for their

VIII. Faith. But however, the Unbelief of Men

as to these Points, is not to be resolved into a Failure or Defect in the Evidence which may be brought in Proof of them; yet perhaps it would be judging rashly, to say that in every Case, even in Christian Countries, it proceeds from Dishonesty of Heart, and the Influence of evil Passions: Indeed with respect to the greatest Part of those who reject the Gospel, and treat the Miracles which give Credit to it with Scorn and Contempt, we have too much Reason to conclude from their Conduct in Life, which is as contradictory to the Principles of natural Religion, as to those of Christianity, that their Opposition to the Gospel flows from the worst Motives; and that though the Evidences of the Truth of it, were much stronger, yet they would still be the same Unbelievers that they are. But it is not improbable that in many Places where Christianity is professed, there may be several who reject it, because they never had an Opportunity of acquainting themselves with the real Nature and Grounds of it. This indeed can but very rarely be the Case in any Countries of Freedom in which Christianity prevails, where the *Scriptures*  
lie



lie open to the Perusal of all Men ; where S E R M.  
every one, who is disposed to inform him- VIII.

self as to the Nature and true Foundations of the Christian Religion, has it constantly in his Power to do so ; and where the very Controversies which are almost always going on about the Truth of the Gospel, naturally call forth the Attention of Men to it, and throw it in their Way, as a Subject of their deliberate and serious Inquiry. But as it is, perhaps, still possible, that some of those who are Infidels or Scepticks with respect to the extraordinary Facts which establish the Truth and Divine Authority of the Gospel, even among ourselves, may be such, from the want of a just Information, through some Unhappiness in their Circumstances and Situation in the World, it will be always most prudent and becoming in us, to treat those of them, whom we have any Reason to believe to be in this State, with Candour and Gentleness, to abstain from all reproachful Censures of them, and harsh Judgments about their future Condition ; and if we find them disposed to inquire fairly into the Reasons and Grounds of Christianity, to encourage that Temper in them, and to give them all the Assistance that we can in their Inquiry. As it  
seems

SERM. seems at the same Time to be plain, that  
VIII. the Evidence for the Resurrection of our  
Saviour, and the other Miracles which support and confirm his Religion, must appear to be conclusive, to all who attend to it, and will be contented with such Grounds of Probability and Measures of Truth, as the Nature of the Case admits of; and as this Evidence must lie very open and obvious in a Country of Liberty, it highly concerns all among us, who profess to disbelieve, or to entertain strong Doubts of the Truth of these Facts, to consider whether their Incredulity, or Scepticism in regard to them, be really excusable? Whether it be the Effect of an invincible or involuntary Ignorance in them? Or, whether it does not proceed, if not from the more gross and palpable Vices, yet from a spiritual Pride and Vanity, or at least from an Indolence, Carelessness, and Inattention of Mind, which alone in a Matter of such Moment, as the receiving or rejecting of a Doctrine, which, to say the least, bids very fair to be from Heaven, must be greatly criminal, and of dangerous Consequence.

4. From what has been discoursed, we may learn how to return an Answer to a Difficulty which has been urged, indeed against

against several Articles of Religion, and particularly against the Resurrection of our Saviour, from the Evidence of it not being

SERM.  
VIII.

overbearing and irresistible. If, say the Adversaries of Christianity, *Christ* really rose from the Dead, and if, as is alledged, mighty Consequences depend upon his Resurrection, why was the Fact left in any Measure questionable, why were only a few of his own Disciples and Followers assured of the Truth of it, why was not the fullest Proof of it given to the whole *Jewish* Nation, and why is not the Evidence of it always so clear and strong, as immediately to command the Assent of all who inquire into it, or are concerned to believe it? Several Things might be said very properly in Answer to this Objection; but I shall make use only of one Consideration, to shew the Absurdity of it, which naturally arises from the present Subject, that the strong Degree of Evidence which the Objection requires for the Resurrection of our Saviour, would have destroyed all the Virtue or Merit of our believing it. The Apostles indeed had the highest Evidence of this Fact which they possibly could have; because this was necessary to render them credible Witnesses of it, or to lay



SERM. lay a just Foundation for our Belief of it,  
VIII. upon their Testimony: But for this very  
Reason, their Faith of the Fact was no way commendable or valuable in a moral Consideration. And if we had the same sensible Evidence of our Lord's Resurrection, which the Apostles had of it, our Belief of it must have been just of as little Worth in a moral Estimation as theirs was. If therefore room was to be left for the Exercise of Virtue in believing the Resurrection of our Saviour, if it was worthy of God to expect from us a diligent and impartial Use of our intelligent Powers in acquiring the Knowledge of such an important Truth, and to govern us in this, as well as in other Cases, according to the Nature which he has given us, it was by no Means fit that the Evidence of this Article of Christianity should have been so clear and strong, as to prevent our Consideration, and immediately to force our Assent. The End of the Divine Government seems plainly to require that the Principles of Religion should be attended with an Evidence sufficient to convince Persons of teachable, humble, unprejudiced, and honest Minds, but not so strong and irresistible as to extort Conviction from the Negligent,

ligent, Obstinate, and Insincere. Upon SERM.  
this Foundation we may attain to a Belief VIII.  
of these Principles, which may be very ef-  
fectual for the good Government of our  
Lives, while at the same Time we disco-  
ver in the several Steps that we take for at-  
taining to this Belief, a most amiable Sim-  
plicity and Ingenuity, and improve our-  
selves in Qualities which are of great Con-  
sequence to the Dignity and Happiness of  
our Nature.

5. From what has been said, we may  
observe the Importance of cultivating al-  
ways a sincere and impartial Love of Truth,  
or an inquisitive, candid, and ingenuous  
Disposition of Mind. This is the true Root  
or Principle from which that Faith, which  
can be considered as a moral Virtue and a  
religious Duty, proceeds; and without it,  
our assenting to all the Doctrines of Reli-  
gion, is so far from being a commendable  
or worthy Thing in us, that it is a Reproach  
to our intelligent Nature, and most plainly  
inconsistent with our Duty as Christians.  
It concerns us therefore to cherish an ho-  
nest, impartial, and teachable Temper, to  
be always ready to inquire into important  
Doctrines and Principles, to review the Rea-  
sons of the Opinions which we hold, and  
to

SERM. to yield to superior Evidence ; to embrace  
 VIII. Christianity, not on the Foot of Prejudice  
 and Education, but from a rational Persua-  
 sion and clear Conviction of the Excellency  
 and Truth of it. This is the only Way to  
*shew ourselves Men*, and to do Honour to  
 the Cause of Religion, to comply with the  
 Intention of our Saviour, and to render our  
 Faith of his Gospel a noble and effectual  
 Principle of Virtue in us.

6. *Lastly*, Let our Belief of the Resur-  
 rection of our Saviour have its proper Influ-  
 ence upon our Hearts and Lives. Faith is  
 intended to be a practical Principle, and  
 unless it has a good Effect upon our Con-  
 duct, it is dead, and cannot be thought to  
 have any Virtue in it. Do we therefore  
 believe upon rational Grounds that our Lord  
 rose from the Dead? Let us shew the  
 Truth and Force of our Faith, by receiv-  
 ing and acknowledging our Saviour as a  
 Divine Teacher and Lawgiver, by submit-  
 ting to his Authority, and adorning the  
 Doctrine which he has delivered to us, by  
 a Conversation suitable to it; particularly  
 let the Resurrection of our Lord be to us  
 an Earnest and Pledge of a future State,  
 and of our own Resurrection, in due Time,  
 to a blessed Immortality; and in Conse-  
 quence



quence of this, let the Consideration of it SERM.  
 be the Means of mortifying our Hearts to VIII.  
 this World, of inspiring us with noble and  
 generous Designs, and exalting us to a most  
 pure and heavenly Life. This is the Use  
 which St. *Paul* exhorts us to make of this  
 Article of our Religion, with whose Words  
 I shall conclude: *If ye then, says he, be* Col. iii. 1.  
*risen with Christ, if ye profess to believe*  
*the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and*  
*if, according to the Representation of your*  
*State in Baptism, ye have been buried with* —ii. 12.  
*him, and have also risen with him, seek*  
*those Things which are above, where Christ*  
*sitteth on the Right Hand of God: Set your* —iii. 1--4.  
*Affection on Things above, not on Things on*  
*the Earth: For ye are dead, and your Life*  
*is hid with Christ in God: And when Christ,*  
*who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye*  
*also appear with him in Glory.*

S E R-

# S E R M O N IX.

The Use, and Abuse of the World.

I C O R. VII. 31.

*And they that use this World, as not abusing it ; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.*

SERM.  
IX.

**T**HE infinitely wise and good Author of our Beings, having thought fit to make us a Compound of Body and Spirit, has accommodated our State and Situation to the Nature which he has given us ; having not only provided proper Objects to employ our spiritual Faculties and Affections, but allied us to a material World, which affords great Variety of Gratification and Entertainment to our external Senses, and likewise gives us noble Opportunities of cultivating our intellectual and moral Powers, and improving them to a great Degree of Perfection.

To

To separate ourselves, therefore, entirely SERM.  
IX.  
from the Concerns and Enjoyments of this }  
World, if it were possible, would yet be a

most unwise and unjustifiable Attempt; as it would be a Fighting against the Law of our Creation, and affecting to live out of our Sphere and Rank. Our Business is to follow the Course of Life which the Constitution of our Beings points out to us; to provide for the Preservation of our Bodies, and secure to ourselves a competent Share of the Pleasures and Satisfaction arising from outward Objects, but still in a Subordination to the Improvement of the better Part of our Nature; so as that our external Enjoyments, instead of being Hinderances to our Progress in Virtue, which there is great Danger of their proving, may be Supports and Encouragements to us in Well-doing, and help to carry us forward to that sublime State of Perfection and Happiness, for which we are finally and ultimately intended. This may in general convince us of the Propriety of the Advice or Direction, which *St. Paul* gives us in the Text, to *use the World, as not abusing it*; where he plainly intimates, that it is not only lawful, but necessary, to attend to the Affairs of the World, and to make use of the Enjoy-

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ments



S E R M. ments of it; yet so, as never to exceed in

IX.  our Desires and Affections towards any worldly Gratifications and Advantages, or to abuse, or pervert them to any evil Purposes. In treating of this Subject, I shall, *First*, explain more particularly this Advice of the Apostle, or shew what is the innocent and lawful Use, and what is to be accounted an Abuse, of the Enjoyments and Advantages of the World. *Secondly*, Consider the Argument, by which St. Paul enforces his Advice, because *the Fashion of this World passeth away*. *Thirdly*, Propose the Means of attaining to a right Temper with respect to our worldly Enjoyments and Interests. *Lastly*, Conclude with some Reflections upon the Whole.

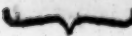
I. I shall explain this Advice of the Apostle, or shew what is the innocent and lawful Use, and what is to be accounted an Abuse, of the Enjoyments and Advantages of the World. Now in order to this, we must consider that God *having given the Earth to the Children of Men*, and made all the Creatures, with which it is replenished, good and useful to us; and having likewise given us Appetites and Capacities to relish and enjoy the good Things of the  

3
World,

World, there are no worldly Pleasures and S E R M. Advantages, which are absolutely, and in IX.

every Degree, unlawful: It would be most absurd to suppose, that the great Author of all Things had prepared external Objects for our Use, which yet were in no Case to be used by us, and had given us Desires and Inclinations towards these Objects, which were never to be gratified, in the Enjoyment of them. It is certain, that we may freely indulge our Desires and Affections towards outward Objects within the Bounds and Limits, which God, in Nature and Reason, has prescribed to us, in the Acquisition and Use of them: Within these Bounds, the Gratification of our Desires of them is always innocent, and in many Cases strictly our Duty. But if to obtain the Pleasures which external Objects are capable of affording, we transgress the Limits which the Author of Nature has set to us in the Exercise of our Affections towards them, we plainly abuse his Favour, and act very inconsistently with the Obligations of Gratitude and Duty which we always lie under to him. To know, therefore, what is the innocent and allowed Use of external Enjoyments and Advantages, and what is the Abuse of them, we must,

SERM. from the Consideration of our own Nature,

IX.  see how far we are intended for such Enjoyments, and in what Degree, we are required, or permitted, by the governing Faculty in our Frame, to acquire and pursue them.

And as to this, every one, even upon a flight Reflection upon himself, may perceive that besides his consisting of Body and Spirit, the two general constituent Parts of his Nature, he has a great Variety of particular Desires, Appetites, and Affections; some of which tend to the Enjoyment of those external good Things which please his bodily Senses, and are necessary for his Support and comfortable Subsistence in the World, and others of them to the procuring other Instances of his private Good; and again that another sort of them tend to the Happiness of Society, or of some other particular Persons; and that together with these Appetites and Affections, he has a Power of moral Discernment, or a Sense of Right, or Wrong, in certain Dispositions and Actions; and a Faculty of Reason, which enables him to search into the Natures and Dependencies of Things. He may likewise see that the Principle of moral Discernment in him, or his natural Conscience



science of Good and Evil, supported and SERM.  
assisted by his Reason, discovering the real IX.

Natures and Consequences of Things, is the highest Faculty in his Constitution, which is to direct him in the Exercise of all his Desires, Passions, and Affections; which is to put these several Principles into Motion, and to continue, or limit their Operation towards their respective Objects, as it thinks fit. This natural Supremacy of Conscience, assisted by our Reason; or this Presidency of our Powers of Conscience and Reason together, over all the other Principles in our Nature, is necessarily to be taken into the Idea of these Faculties, without which no intelligible Account can be given of the Constitution of human Nature. The Dictates, therefore, of these superior Powers of our Nature, are the Law which the Author of our Beings has put us under, in obeying, or disobeying which, we, at the same Time, observe, or contradict, the Will of our Creator.

Now as these leading Faculties in our Constitution, direct us to the Improvement of ourselves in Virtue, as the highest and noblest Object upon which we can fix our Attention, as the Thing, which is both our Dignity and Happiness in this World, and

SERM. will be the certain Means of advancing us

IX. to a State of the greatest Perfection and

~ Felicity in the next; it is plain, that the general Limitation which we are laid under, in the Pursuit of outward Enjoyments and Advantages, is, that we are not to purchase any of them at the Expence of our Innocence and Integrity, or to obtain, or use them, in a manner inconsistent with Religion, and our Progress in moral Goodness. This general Boundary we must never transgress, in acquiring and using any of the good Things of this World; otherwise we shall plainly violate the Law of our Nature; and for the sake of some of the lower Purposes of Life, neglect the principal End of it; and for some trifling and transitory Pleasures and Honours, lose our Claim to substantial and everlasting Blessedness and Glory. Under this Limitation, however, there is still Scope enough given to us, to gratify our natural Desires and Affections towards the Enjoyments of the World, and to procure to ourselves, not only the outward good Things which are absolutely necessary for the Support of our Beings, but those of them likewise, which minister to the Pleasure and Comfort, and even to the Ornament, Elegance, and Grandeur

deur of Life. This I shall explain a little SERM.  
more particularly. IX.

1. It cannot be doubted but that our Desires of the external Enjoyments *necessary* for the Support of Life, may be lawfully indulged by us. Our Existence in the World, being the Foundation of all the Good we are capable of in Life, as well as of our attaining to the higher Degrees of future Happiness, the Continuance of it is certainly to be taken Care of by us. The higher Principles in our Minds are so far from forbidding the Gratification of our Appetites of the Necessaries of Life, that they require and oblige us to gratify them, and will not permit us to be careless or indifferent about these Necessaries, but when we cannot have them, without acting inconsistently with the most important Business of Life, the holding fast our Integrity and Virtue; and would even allow us, if we happened to be reduced, not through any Idleness, Sloth, or Prodigality of our own, but through unavoidable Misfortunes, to a perishing Condition, to save ourselves from immediate Destruction, by Methods, which in common Cases would not be justifiable.



SERM.

2. It is evident, that we may very in-

IX.

nocently indulge our Affections, not only towards the *Necessaries*, but likewise towards a certain Share of the *Pleasures, Conveniences, and Comforts* of Life. Human Life, with bare *Necessaries*, would be but a cold insipid Thing, and no way proportioned to those Capacities or Powers of Enjoyment, with which our Nature is furnished: We have Desires of a great Variety of Things, beyond what is absolutely wanted to support Life; we have Inclinations and Passions which prompt us to consult, not only our Being, but our Well-being, and our subsisting easily and agreeably in the World. It has, therefore, pleased the gracious Father of Mankind, to constitute the World so, as that every Person in good Health, with Industry and Application, may supply himself readily, not only with *Necessaries*, but with several *Pleasures, Satisfaction, and Accommodations*, which will render his State here very tolerable, and even comfortable to him. Indeed, as the Author of Nature is said to have *poured out Wisdom on all his Works*, so he may be said to have scattered Pleasure throughout the Universe, in such Manner that joyful Sensations necessarily flow in upon us, from  
innumerable

innumerable Objects, through every Inlet SERM.  
and Avenue to our Minds. But besides IX.

those natural and common Joys and Benefits, which unavoidably force themselves upon all perceptive and rational Beings in the World, there are several particular Satisfactions and Conveniencies, which every Man, by his own Care and Labour, may procure to himself. For Instance, every one of tolerable Health and Understanding, and living under the Protection of equal Laws, may provide to himself Food, that will be not only wholesome and nourishing, but agreeable and grateful to his Palate; he may have such Habitation and Cloathing, as will not only defend him against the Injuries of the Weather, but in some Degree please his Taste, or Fancy, in Houses, Furniture, and Dress; he may likewise contract Friendships, or enter into the conjugal State, and have a Family and Offspring, and by this Means obtain some of the most sincere and solid Pleasures which the present Life admits of; he may acquire the Knowledge of some ingenious and useful Art, which may yield him a great deal both of Entertainment and Profit; or he may engage in any of the several Ways of Commerce, in Proportion to his Oppor-

SERM. Opportunities and Abilities, and increase

IX. his Stock of Wealth, so as to have a reasonable Security against future Wants and Casualties, and be able, with Pleasure and Reputation, to discharge his Duty to his Country, his Family, and Friends, and all who have a Right to his Assistance. Now the moral and rational Powers of our Nature by no means prohibit this Improvement of our outward Condition, but on the contrary, require us to keep ourselves always in that easy and satisfied State, which is necessary to give us a lively Sense of the Bounty of our Creator, and to fill us with Gratitude and Love to him, and to make us more chearfully perform the Offices of Justice and Humanity which we owe either to Society, or to particular Persons. Nay, as many of the private Pleasures and Accommodations of Life, are directly publick Advantages and Benefits, it is plain, that we may with the fullest Approbation of our Minds, with the immediate Consciousness of a virtuous and honourable Intention, pursue and acquire them. And as for the other Pleasures and Conveniencies of the World, which either contribute remotely to the publick Good, or are perfectly consistent with it, we may,  
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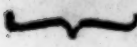


at least, with the Consciousness of Inno- SERM.  
cence, acquire and enjoy them; provided IX.

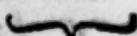
still that our Desires of worldly Pleasure and Ease, however innocent in itself, never become so strong in our Hearts, as to diminish our Relish of nobler Enjoyments, and to soften our Spirits, and cool our Zeal in the Acquisition of those excellent Qualities, which are of the greatest Consequence, both to the lasting Peace of our Minds in this Life, and the supreme Dignity and Happiness of our Beings in the next.

3. But farther, as in the Exercise of our Affections towards external Objects, we are not limited to bare *Necessaries*, so neither are we to the *common Comforts and Conveniences* of Life; but may, if we have Opportunity, acquire and use those outward Advantages, which are the Means of *adorn- ing* Life, of adding a *Polish and Beauty* to it, and shewing it in *Splendor and Magnificence*. As the Governor of the World, has made an Inequality in Men's outward Circumstances and Stations necessary for the Order and Happiness of Society, and as the most delicate and elegant Pleasures, the most manly and honourable Enjoyments of Life, result from the just Possession, and good Application of the higher Degrees of Riches

SERM. Riches and Power, it is plain, that the ho-

IX.  nest Acquisition, and discreet Use of a great Fortune and a superior Station, are not only innocent, but highly laudable: It is certain, that Desires of these Advantages, upon a Perception of their Importance in Life, arise, in some measure, almost universally, in the Minds of Men, and, according to the Intention of Nature, are to be Spurs to a virtuous Activity, and the Foundation of a generous and heroick Conduct. It must be owned indeed, that there are but Few, who are capable of arriving, by justifiable and fair Means, at the first Degrees of Wealth and Authority, which the Constitution of Societies admits of; and there are, perhaps, still Fewer, who, if they were in such an Elevation, would be capable of improving the Advantages of their exalted Condition, in the Manner that is necessary to make them turn to their real Happiness and Glory: So that the Generality of Men are never to indulge their Affections towards a State of great Affluence, or Grandeur, which, if it were a Thing attainable by them, would be only the Means of exposing their Weakness, and involving them in Infamy and Ruin; but should restrain their Desires to that Fortune and Condition

of

of Life, which is best proportioned to the SERM.  
Strength of their Minds, and which they IX.  
may be able to use with Decency and Ho- 

nour. But whoever are conscious of such an Integrity and Greatness of Mind, as render them superior to the Temptations incident to a State of great Prosperity, and are either born, or raise themselves, by their own Industry and Merit, to the more eminent Degrees of Wealth, Influence, and Power, may certainly have the noblest Relish of Life, and enjoy it in its greatest Lustre and Dignity; as they may, not only have all the Satisfaction and Comforts which Persons of an inferior Rank enjoy, but command almost every Object, that is necessary for pleasing the most curious Taste, and the most refined Imagination; and more especially as they may abound in the Acts of a magnificent Generosity, and the most extensive Benevolence, encouraging Merit, protecting oppressed Innocence, establishing Right and Justice in the World, contributing greatly to the Welfare of whole Communities, and diffusing Happiness of various Kinds among great Numbers of Men; by these Means, exalting themselves into a sort of Divinities to the Rest of Mankind; or, more truly, becoming the Instruments of  
Provi-



SERM. Providence for promoting the most glorious

IX. Designs of God with respect to Men, and  
in Consequence of that, partaking, in some  
Degree, of the Glory and Happiness of  
God himself.

Thus we see what is the innocent and justifiable Use of the Enjoyments and Advantages of the World: The Abuse of them may be easily known from what has been said. As the innocent and good Use of them consists in proportioning our Affections to the real Value of them; in acquiring them only by honest and fair Methods; in employing them, agreeably to the Design of the Author of Nature, for the Preservation of our Beings, and Keeping ourselves in that contented and easy State, which makes us most capable of discharging the Duties which we owe to God, and our Neighbours; and in considering the higher Degrees of them, as the Means of abounding in the Acts of a more generous and sublime Virtue, and improving them accordingly; the Abuse of them, on the contrary, consists in desiring them with too great Vehemence of Affection, and esteeming them as the great, or principal Happiness of Life; in preferring them to the Pleasures of Virtue, and endeavouring to possess

possess ourselves of them by dishonest and wicked Means, in the Ways of Fraud, Injustice, Treachery, and Cruelty; and in applying the Share of Wealth and Power which we may have attained to, to the Purposes of Debauchery, Luxury, Voluptuousness, Avarice, Vanity, Insolence, Oppression, and Tyranny. This immoderate Love, and Misapplication of worldly Enjoyments and Advantages, is a flagrant Perversion and Abuse of them, and a most unworthy Return to the Goodness of God, in providing such Abundance of outward good Things, to be the Support and Delight of Mankind in this World, and likewise, by being rightly used, to contribute to the highest Improvement and Happiness of our Nature, in the whole Extent of our Existence. Our Appetites and Affections towards the Pleasures, Riches, Honours, and Dignities of Life, which are naturally very innocent and useful Dispositions, when exerted in this irregular Manner, degenerate into the greatest Vices, and become what St. *John* condemns, by the Names of *the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lusts of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; Things, utterly inconsistent with the prevalent Love of God and Religion, the Product of enormous Passions rebelling

SERM.

IX.

<sup>i</sup> John ii.  
<sup>16.</sup>

SERM. rebelling against the clear Dictates of Con-  
 IX. science and Reason, and Sources of innumerable Evils both to ourselves and others.

II. I proceed to consider the Argument by which St. Paul inforces his Advice, of *using the World, so as not to abuse it*; because *the Fashion of this World passeth away*. There are indeed several Considerations of great Weight, to restrain us from an undue Love of the Enjoyments and Advantages of the World; such, as its Repugnancy to the Spirit of true Religion, its Tendency to corrupt and debase our Minds, to stifle and suppress every generous and manly Principle in us, and to fill us only with low and groveling, or with unfociable and mischievous Passions; and the Misery which it must bring upon ourselves both in this, and a future State: These are Arguments, which cannot but have great Force for moderating the Affections of Men towards this World, if they give themselves leave to reflect, and have any Remains of Goodness or Generosity of Spirit, or even any rational Concern for their own Welfare in them. But perhaps nothing sets the Madness of an immoderate Love and Pursuit of worldly Enjoyments in a more universally striking



striking Light, than St. Paul's Consideration S E R M.  
in the Text, that *the Fashion of this World* IX.

*passeth away.* The World is only a transient and short Scene, which will quickly be over. *For what is our Life,* the Foundation of all earthly Pleasures and Enjoyments, *but a Vapour, which appeareth for a* Jam. iv.  
*little Time, and then vanisheth away?* What <sup>14.</sup>  
daily Instances have we of its Frailty and Uncertainty? How many sensible Proofs are ever occurring to us, that *Man, in his* Ps. xxxix,  
*best Estate, is altogether Vanity,* liable to be <sup>5.</sup>  
cut down by a thousand Accidents? Or, suppose the Life of a Man protracted to the longest Period, to which, according to the Course of Nature, it can be drawn out; yet, how small a Number of Years comprehends the Term of its Duration? And for how considerable a Part of these, may he possibly be dead to this World, having lost all Taste and Relish of its Enjoyments? So that unless he has some Fund of inward Satisfaction, he may, with the greatest Affluence of outward Advantages, be absolutely miserable. Or, should all his Powers and Senses be supposed to continue vigorous and acute to the last, yet how easily may all external Materials and Means of gratifying and pleasing them, be removed? For

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the

SERM. the Possessions of this World are no less

IX. mutable and uncertain, than the Proprietors of them are. Though Diligence and Prudence in the Conduct of our Affairs, are indeed usually the Means both of obtaining and securing a Fortune, yet, in how many Instances are Men disappointed, after using their greatest Industry and Skill in the Pursuit of Wealth, and they find it impracticable to attain to the Degrees of it which they have aimed at? And how frequently are Riches lost, after they have been acquired?

Matt. vi. 29. *A Moth, or Rust corrupts them, or Thieves break through and steal them; or, they make themselves Wings, according to*

Prov. xxiii. 5. *the Observation of Solomon, and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven; that is, they moulder and consume in a manner hardly to be accounted for. How slippery is the Foundation, upon which great Power stands? How many Engines are almost continually at work, to undermine the Man, who is in Possession of it; and how difficult is it for him to guard against all the open Attempts, and secret Artifices of his Enemies? Even the most wise and generous Use of Power, whatever it ought to be, is well known to be no Protection to a Man, or Security for continuing him*

in the Enjoyment of it; and though indi-  
rect Arts may sometimes prop up a Man in  
Power, longer, perhaps, than the most pru-  
dent and upright Conduct would have sup-  
ported him, yet these almost always fail at  
last, and the Man is forced to descend,  
perhaps, a great deal below the Persons  
whom he has formerly insulted and oppres-  
sed. So transitory and fleeting a Thing, in  
every View of it, this World is! This, I  
know, is a common Topick, upon which,  
almost every one is ready to declaim: But  
it is far from being considered by Men, with  
such Attention and Seriousness, as it de-  
serves. If it were, it could not, certainly,  
but have a great Influence for cooling our  
Hearts, and slackening our Pace in the Pro-  
secution of our worldly Interests and Ad-  
vantages, and prevent our exceeding the  
Bounds of Nature, both in the Acquisition  
and Use of them. For who that has  
always a deep and lively Conviction of the  
Vanity and Mutability of all earthly Things,  
will think it worth his while, to be im-  
moderately careful about them, or allow him-  
self in any unjustifiable Measures to obtain  
them? Who that seriously reflects that *this*  
*World passeth away and the Lust thereof,* <sup>1 Joh. ii.</sup>  
*but that he who doeth the Will of God abideth* <sup>17.</sup>



SERM. *for ever*; who, I say, that considers this,

IX. and conducts himself according to any

Rules of Wisdom and Prudence, will not chuse to use the World with great Moderation; to receive and enjoy with Thankfulness and Sobriety, the outward Blessings which kind Providence bestows on him, for his necessary Support and Comfort thro' the various and dangerous Stages of Life; and to seek the higher Degrees of external Advantages, not so much for the Purposes of his private Gratification, as to be the Instruments of his doing greater Good, and exerting more effectually his humane and benevolent Dispositions? Who that habitually recollects how precarious and shifting a Scene this World is, and that it must soon give place to another and an infinitely more important State, and governs himself in any measure, either by the Dictates of Reason, or by a Regard to his own Interest; who, with this Sense of Things, and this Disposition of Mind, will *not possess the World, as if he possessed it not*, and be so far from engaging too deeply with it, and from making it his only, or principal Business, to live in a constant Round of Pleasures, and to arrive at a still greater Height of Pomp and Splendor, that he will be

gradually removing his Affections from SERM.  
all the fading and temporary Enjoyments IX.  
which he has in his Power, and be in-  
finitely less solicitous in adding to his Stock  
of them, than in turning the Share of them  
which he has to a good Account, and im-  
proving himself, in the Use of them, in  
those excellent and divine Qualities, which,  
when the present Scene is closing, and the  
World is for ever vanishing from his Eyes,  
will yield him the most solid Comfort and  
purest Delight, and be the Foundation of  
his perfect and compleat Happiness in the  
eternal Kingdom of God?

III. The *Third* Thing which I under-  
took, was to propose the Means of attain-  
ing to a right Temper with respect to our  
worldly Enjoyments and Interests. And  
as an undue Affection and wrong Turn of  
Mind towards these Objects, arises chiefly  
from the absurd and fantastick Notions  
which we have of their Worth, and from  
the constant Influence of them upon our  
external Senses; it is necessary for remedy-  
ing this Evil, and forming in us a just and  
becoming Disposition towards the Things  
of Life, to correct our false and vain No-  
tions of the Value of these Things, and to

SERM. acquire true Opinions of the real Worth of  
IX. them; and to withdraw our Minds frequently from this present sensible Scene, and to fix them seriously and habitually on that future invisible State, which is of infinite and eternal Consequence to us.

I. Let us correct our vain Notions of the Enjoyments of Life, and fix in our Minds rational Opinions of their real Value and Importance. It is plain that Mankind run very generally into great Absurdity and Confusion, in their Imaginations about external Advantages; that they connect in their Minds Ideas of superior Enjoyment, Dignity, and Excellence, with the Possession of the higher Degrees of these Advantages; nay, that many look upon a large Share of them, as almost the only Thing deserving their Attention and Regard, as being absolutely necessary to a happy and honourable Life, and the certain Means of arriving at it. From hence proceeds their violent Attachment to the World, and their incessant hurrying after the greatest Degrees of Riches and Power which they can attain to; and to possess themselves of these, their seldom stopping at any Practices, that conduce to their End, however unjust and dishonourable; and their acting a Part in the Use  
of

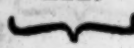


of them, quite below the Dignity of their SERM.  
Nature, and contrary to the Laws of it, IX.

for which every Man, who has a true and impartial Sense of Things, must greatly pity, or despise them, and which their own Consciences would certainly condemn, if they viewed their Actions in a true Light, and not through that dazzling Glare which their irregular and deluding Imaginations throw upon them. In order therefore, to the acquiring and cultivating a reasonable Temper with regard to the World, it is necessary to bring our extravagant Fancies of the Value of its Goods, under Examination; to inquire whether the Associations which we may have formed of Ideas of high Enjoyment, and extraordinary Merit, with a Property in the superior Degrees of external Goods be well founded; to consider the Intention of the Author of Nature in supplying us with outward good Things, and to settle true Notions of the Use, End, and Worth of them in our Minds. If we set ourselves in earnest to do this, we shall soon come to see Things in a very different Light from that in which a vain and giddy Imagination may have presented them to us, and be convinced that neither *the Happiness nor Dignity of human Life consisteth*

SERM. *in the Abundance of the Things which a*

*IX.* *Man possesseth.* We shall see that the Things absolutely necessary for our Support, are but few, and soon provided; that the common Comforts and Conveniencies which we want in the World, are likewise readily obtained; and that after this, additional Advantages, so far as private Enjoyment depends upon them, may be easily spared. We shall find that Health, Content, and Cheerfulness, which are among the most substantial Blessings of Life, are as commonly the Portion of Men in a mean Fortune, as they are of the Wealthy and Great; and that the most solid Merit, consisting in pious and virtuous Affections, and the regular Exercise of these in Proportion to a Man's Abilities, together with the noble and divine Pleasures which result from thence, do not at all depend upon any outward Circumstances, but are in the Power of every Mortal, of the lowest and poorest, as well as of the highest and most potent, and that in Fact they are usually found in greater Degrees in Persons of an inferior or middle Station, than in those of the most affluent Fortune, and most exalted Condition. We shall perceive, that though Riches, Rank, and Power, are indeed Talents

lents and Advantages which may be laid out SERM.  
to the most valuable Purposes, not only to IX.  
the Increase of a Man's private Satisfaction,   
but to the adorning of his Life, and the  
highest Exaltation of his Character, yet  
they are not of so much Consequence, that  
a Man, conscious of his Integrity, need  
think himself either unhappy or contemp-  
tible for the Want of them; that it is not  
the bare Possession, but the discreet and ge-  
nerous Use of outward Advantages, which  
is the Source of any extraordinary Pleasure  
or Honour to a Man; and that the Dispo-  
sition to make a good Use of them, may  
be as strong in the Persons who do not, as  
it is in those who possess them, and when  
it is so, that it may be the Foundation of  
as much inward Pleasure to them, and pro-  
cure them as much Esteem from all who  
know them, as those have, whose Circum-  
stances enable them more effectually to exert  
it. These Sentiments will probably be the  
Result of a cool and deliberate Inquiry con-  
cerning the real Use and Value of the En-  
joyments and Advantages of this World:  
And by impressing these Notions deeply up-  
on our Minds, we shall guard against those  
Phantoms and Delusions, which are so apt  
to bewilder and confound us in the Pro-  
secution



SERM. secution of our worldly Interests, and be

IX.

prepared to exercise our Affections towards them in a due Order and Proportion; being left at Liberty to acquire, and enjoy freely whatever is really necessary for our Support and Comfort in Life, and to possess ourselves likewise, if we can do it by just and honourable Means, even of the highest Degrees of outward Advantages, and to lay them out, when we have obtained them, for procuring to ourselves any innocent Gratifications, and more especially the most noble and sublime Pleasures of Humanity and good Offices; while yet we shall not be pushed on by any enthusiastick Opinions of the Worth of external Objects, to desire them too earnestly, or to prefer the Possession of them to the Consciousness of Virtue. And if we will resolutely act upon this Scheme, we shall in Time acquire such a confirmed Temper of Moderation, with respect to the World, as will prevent our abusing it, or our breaking through, for the Sake of its Advantages, any Obligations which we are under, as Christians, and rational and moral Agents.

2. For forming a right Temper in us towards the World, let us always cultivate a lively and vigorous Sense of a future State,

One

One great Reason of our immoderate Love SERM.  
of the World, is the constant Operation of IX.

its Objects upon our outward Senses, and the deep and lasting Impressions which these make upon our Minds; from whence such strong Desires and Inclinations towards them arise in us, as are apt, without leaving Time for Reflection, to hurry us into very unjustifiable Measures, both in obtaining and enjoying them. Now the most effectual Way of guarding against this dangerous Influence of external Objects, and giving our Minds a good Ply with respect to the World, is to retire frequently in our Thoughts from this sensible transitory Scene, and to settle in our Minds an habitual lively Sense of that future everlasting State, the Enjoyments of which are of infinitely greater Moment to us, than any that we can here obtain. Whoever has always a firm Belief, and vigorous Hope of the Happiness of a future Life, will certainly be in no great Danger of desiring any of the Enjoyments of this World inordinately, or abusing them in any respect. A Mind constantly actuated by these Principles, though it will remit nothing of a reasonable Care and Industry about the Concerns of this Life, yet must be so fully satisfied of the Insignificancy of them

SERM. them all, when compared with the sublime

IX. Glories, and the substantial and permanent

Joys of Futurity, that it will have an absolute Contempt of them, whenever they come in Competition with these, and will still be disposed to use *Things temporal*, so as more effectually to secure those that are *eternal*. The Difficulty indeed is to keep our Faith and Hope of a future Existence always in a due Degree of Force and Vigour. For though the Evidences which we have of it, are so very obvious and full, as to be capable of convincing every fair and just Enquirer of its Reality, yet as it is a remote Object, and as the Exercises and Enjoyments of it will be in a great measure new, and different in many Circumstances, from any that we have had Experience of in this World, the greatest Part of Men, however they may profess to believe it, are really but little attentive to it, and form such faint and languid Notions of it, as almost always disappear in the Hurry of their common Affairs, and hardly at any Time have any considerable Effect upon their Minds. It is, therefore, very necessary to inquire seriously and deliberately into the Evidences of a future Life, and frequently to revive, and go over in our Minds,

all



all those Considerations which persuade us SERM.  
of its Certainty, and to dwell with Pleasure IX.

on the Contemplation of the Felicity provided for good Men in it, which we must conclude, according to all our Notions of the Divine Administration, will infinitely exceed, both in Quality and Duration, all the Happiness that we were ever acquainted with upon Earth, though the Nature of it at present is not to be fully understood by us. And if by calm Inquiry, and serious Meditation, we confirm ourselves in the Belief of another Life, raise our Apprehensions of the Happiness to be enjoyed in it, and render the Expectation of it familiar and habitual to our Minds, it is hardly possible that we should be overcome by the Temptations of the World, but shall be able to converse freely in it, and to attend to all the Affairs of it, and yet *to keep ourselves unspotted from it*; and be so far from sacrificing our Integrity, and our Hopes of Immortality, to our Desires of the mean and precarious Advantages of Life, that we shall be above all things solicitous to make our worldly Interests and Possessions, the Means of our abounding in the Acts of Goodness here, and our obtaining a larger Share of the Rewards of it hereafter.

SERM. I shall conclude with a Reflection or  
IX. two, upon what has been discoursed.

1. We may here see the Mistake of those Persons, who imagine that a Renunciation of the World, and stripping themselves of the common Comforts and Conveniencies of Life, is included in that Contempt of the World, which is the Duty of Christians, or a necessary Ingredient in a perfectly religious Character. That Notions of this Kind have prevailed, making Multitudes of Men to retire from the World, not for a short Time, for the sake of Recollection and Improvement, (which is a Thing of great Use, and that should be frequently practised by all of us) but entirely and absolutely, and to spend their whole Lives in a Way, not only useless, but burthensome to Society, as well as uneasy and grievous to themselves, is a Matter extremely well known. The utter Absurdity of these Notions must be as apparent to all Men of any Reflection: For what can be more foolish than to suppose that the Author of our Beings could ever intend that we should pursue a Course of Life quite unnatural to us, contrary both to the Dictates of the governing Faculties in our Constitution, and to every Instinct and Propension implanted in

in our Hearts? What more vain than to SERM.  
think that the wise and good Governor of IX.  
the World will be pleased with our desert-  
ing our Post, and flying from the Duty  
which he has imposed on us, of contribu-  
ting by our Industry and Activity, both to  
the Order and Welfare of the Publick, and  
to the Encrease of our private Happiness?  
Certainly all Notions of the peculiar Excel-  
lence and Merit of such a Conduct, have  
no Foundation either in Reason, or Reli-  
gion, and can proceed from nothing but  
a most disagreeable Sullenness and Gloomi-  
ness of Temper, or some extravagant and  
violent Enthusiasm. Indeed the Withdraw-  
ing from Society, and Throwing up the ne-  
cessary Business, and innocent Enjoyments  
of Life, is so far from being an Argument  
of any Generosity or Greatness of Mind in  
us, or of the Eminence of our Virtue and  
religious Dispositions, that it is a clear Proof  
of just the Reverse, of a weak and feeble  
Mind, unable to discern, or to pursue the  
just Measures of Life; and of our being  
under the Influence of Passions, which are  
both unbecoming the Dignity of the rea-  
sonable Nature, and inconsistent with the  
Principles of true Religion. The true Way  
to discover our Magnanimity, and Superio-  
rity



SERM. rity to the Temptations of the World, and

IX. the Force which the Principles of Religion have upon us, is, not to run out of the World, but to act the Part assigned to us in it, becomingly ; to exercise our Affections, in a just Order, towards the several Objects which are by Nature suited and adapted to them, still keeping them subject to the calm Directions of the ruling Principle in our Minds, and preventing all the Exorbitancies and Excesses of them. This will indeed be to triumph over the World, and to shew that we are animated with the most noble and generous Sentiments and Dispositions, and arrived at as great Perfection in Virtue, as the present Condition of our Nature will admit of.

2. We may, from what has been said, see the much more general Error of Mankind, in suffering a worldly Spirit to grow in them, and in pursuing and using so irregularly, as they commonly do, the Enjoyments and Advantages of this present Life. The World has been always the great Enemy of Men, which has drawn them  
 1 Tim. vi. *into Temptations and Snares, and into many*  
 9. *foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown them in Destruction and Perdition.* It would be hard to fix upon any Period, in which the  
 Love

Love of this World, has not had a more SERM.  
universal Influence upon Mankind, than the IX.

Love of God and Religion; and it is too plain that the Attachments of Men to their temporal Interests are not at present lessening. Perhaps, on the contrary, there are now greater Numbers than have been formerly known, who openly profess their having a Regard for Nothing, but what they take to be their Interest in this Life; who, according to the Philosophy of the worst Sort of Infidels and Scepticks of old, deride the Notions of *moral Good and Evil*, of a *Right and a Wrong* in Life, and think that *we were born at all Adventures, and that Hereafter we shall be, as though we had never been*; who are, therefore, for enjoying the good Things that are present; for taking their Share of Voluptuousness, and leaving Tokens of their Jollity in every Place; who oppress the poor righteous Man, who spare not the Widow, nor reverence the grey Hairs of the Aged; who make their Strength the Law of Justice, and account that which is feeble to be nothing worth. And as to those who are not tainted with such bad Principles, who are ready to acknowledge the Obligations of Virtue, and profess to believe the general Doctrines of Religion, how mi-

Wisdom  
ii. 2, 6, 9,  
10, 11.

SERM. serably do a great Part of them fully, and

IX. *contradict their Profession, by an earthly, sensual, and vain Conversation; by bending their whole Thoughts and Endeavours to the Acquisition of Wealth, and attaining to Stations of Power and Honour, and shewing but very little Goodness and Humanity, and frequently but little Decency in the Use of these Advantages? The Inconsistency of this Conduct with the Obligations of moral Agents, with the Design of the Religion of Christ, and the Hopes and Expectations which he has raised his Followers to, must be sufficiently obvious to every unprejudiced thinking Man. And however*

Psal. xlix. 6. *the Children of this World, may at present boast themselves in the Multitude of their Riches, and imagine that they are the only prudent and happy Men, contemning all who do not go into their Measures, as Persons void of Sense, or Spirit; yet they too shall come to have another Sense of Things, and be effectually convinced of the Unworthiness and Madness of their Pursuits, when the righteous Judge of the World calls Mankind to an Account for their Conduct, and reckons with them for the Improvement of their Talents: Then, most certainly, all the Wisdom of this World*  
will



*will be found to be but Foolishness; and they* SERM.  
*alone will appear to be the excellent, wise,* IX.  
*and happy Persons, who having always*  
*moderated and exercised their Affections*  
*towards earthly Things by the Dictates of*  
*Conscience and Religion, and faithfully ap-*  
*plied all their natural Powers, and all the*  
*Interests and Advantages which they had*  
*in the World, to the Ends for which they*  
*were intrusted with them during this tem-*  
*porary Scene, shall, at the Conclusion of it,*  
*be thought worthy of being received into* Luke xvi.  
*everlasting Habitations.* 2.

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SER-

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# S E R M O N X.

The destructive Tendency of a Life  
of licentious Pleasure.

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1 TIM. V. 6

*But she that liveth in Pleasure, is dead  
while she liveth.*

SERM.  
X.

**W**HAT the Apostle here affirms of one Sex, is equally true of both; that when they run into a Course of licentious Pleasure, and mind nothing but the indulging themselves, in Debauchery, Luxury, and Vanity, they are dead to all the great Purposes of a rational and virtuous Life. Though they are naturally alive, yet in a spiritual and moral Sense, they are dead: They retain indeed the outward Appearance of Men, and breathe, and move, and enjoy as sensitive Creatures; but the higher Powers, and more amiable Affections, which distinguish our Species from the

the inferior Parts of the Creation, are ex-SERM.  
tinct in them; they are quite insensible of X.  
the true Dignity of human Nature, and of  
the Ends for which reasonable and moral  
Powers have been given to them, and as  
little careful to acquit themselves like Men  
and Christians, as if they did not exist at  
all.

This will certainly appear to be a strange  
Assertion to the Persons themselves, who  
have got a strong Taste for what is com-  
monly called a Life of Gaiety and Pleasure,  
who are apt to imagine that they of all Men  
take the justest Estimate of Life, and cal-  
culate the Measures of it most accurately;  
insomuch that they despise all, who set up  
upon a Scheme different from their own,  
as “dull Souls, insipid wretched Mortals,  
“void both of Understanding and Spirit,  
“who are cramped and enslaved by precise  
“superstitious Notions, and influenced by  
“the meanest Passions, and who instead  
“of using and enjoying Life, only drag  
“through, and endure it.”

It will, therefore, be necessary, both for  
undeceiving these Persons, if it be possible,  
and securing ourselves from their pernicious  
Error, to enquire into the Grounds of St.  
*Paul's* Assertion, or to consider how an



SERM. immoderate Pursuit of Pleasure destroys the  
 X. Mind, and all the nobler Affections be-  
 longing to our Nature, and is inconsistent  
 both with the principal Business, and true  
 Happiness of human Life. This I shall  
 first do, and then proceed to some useful  
 Observations and Reflections which will  
 arise upon this Subject.

For discerning the Reasons of St. *Paul's* Assertion, we must consider that the human Mind being the Subject of various Powers, some of which are naturally designed for directing and governing the Rest, the Life, and Strength, the Perfection, Harmony, and Happiness of it, result from its exerting its Faculties according to the Order of Nature; from the steady Superintendency and Government of its higher Powers, over all the inferior Principles and Movements in it, and the Subjection of These to the Judgment and Determination of its leading Faculties: Just as the Soundness and Strength of any complex Constitution consist in the exact Adjustment and due Proportion of its several Parts, the Dependence of some upon others, and the Subordination of all the lower Principles, to that which is chief and supreme in the whole System. Whoever attends to his several inward Powers

Powers and Principles, and the Rank and SERM.  
Importance of them in the human Consti- X.  
tution, must immediately be sensible that  
his Conscience and Reason are advanced to  
the Seat of Judgment and Authority, while  
his Appetites, Passions, and Affections, are  
put in a State of Subjection to these go-  
verning Faculties. Every Man who finds  
in himself a Power of moral Discernment,  
or a Sense of Good and Evil, in his Affec-  
tions and Actions, and a Faculty of Reason  
enabling him to discover the Natures and  
Tendencies of Things, must as easily see,  
that they were designed to govern all the  
other Principles in his Mind, and to guide  
and direct his Life, as that his Eyes were  
intended for seeing, and his Feet for walk-  
ing, or that any other of his external Senses  
or Members were made to serve the Uses  
and Purposes, to which they are most evi-  
dently fitted and adapted. Now the Con-  
duct to which these superior Powers in our  
Constitution lead and direct us, is briefly  
this:

First, With respect to God; (whose Ex-  
istence and Attributes we know from the  
Consideration of his Works) that we wor-  
ship him with the most profound Venera-  
tion, the sincerest Love and Gratitude, the

SERM. most firm Affiance and Trust, and the most  
X. humble Submission and Resignation; and  
that we express our inward Sentiments and  
Dispositions towards him in all proper outward Acts, of Prayer and Praise, and Endeavours to imitate his Nature, and comply with his Will. Again, with respect to Mankind; that we abstain from all Injuries, and treat every Man according to the strict Rules of Righteousness and Equity, and the Dictates of Compassion and Humanity; that we be true to the Interests of Society, and not only promote the Happiness of Those, who immediately depend upon us, and are nearly related to us, but steadily pursue the most universal absolute Good in our Power. And lastly, with regard to ourselves; that we carefully cultivate our Minds, and enrich them with Wisdom and Virtue; that we endeavour after the highest Degrees of the Love of God and of Mankind, as being the Foundation both of our greatest Perfection, and truest Happiness; and that we desire and use all external Benefits and Advantages always with a reference to this inward Improvement, and so as to make them subservient to our Progress in true Goodness. This is the Conduct to which our moral  
and



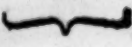
and rational Powers, so long as our Minds SERM.  
are not disordered or corrupted, always di- X.  
rect us, and which we cannot neglect to  
pursue, without subverting the Order of  
Nature, and introducing Dissonancy and  
Confusion into the System of our inward  
Principles and Affections. This is like-  
wise the Course of Life which Religion in-  
tends to engage us in; for as it sets out,  
and proceeds upon the Plan of Nature,  
the great Design of it, is to reinforce and  
strengthen all our natural Obligations, and  
to inculcate upon us, by the most effectual  
Motives, those very Things, which the  
higher Faculties and Principles in our Minds  
approve and recommend to us. Whoever,  
therefore, cultivates this Temper in him-  
self, and pursues this Conduct, is plainly  
exercising his Powers in the best Order,  
and greatest Perfection; he is leading the  
Life of a Man, and of a Christian, and is  
possessed of the truest Dignity, Honour,  
and Felicity, of which human Nature is at  
present capable.

I have given this short and general Ac-  
count of the natural State and Order of the  
human Mind, and of the Things which  
constitute our Perfection and Happiness, as  
reasonable and moral Beings, and Persons  
acting

SERM. acting under the Influence of Religion, that

X. we may the better see the Inconsistency of  
 a Course of licentious Pleasure, with a  
 sound and vigorous State of Mind, and  
 with our principal Business, and truest Happiness, as Men and Christians.

Indeed there is no enormous Passion, which does not break the natural Tone and Order of the Mind, and which, if indulged and cherished, does not in time as effectually ruin it, as the immoderate Pursuit of Pleasure does. The wild Ambition of Men, their extravagant Pride, insatiable Covetousness, and unrelenting Hatred and Malice, are as contrary to the Constitution of our Nature, usurp as much upon the higher Principles of the Mind, and make as great Havock of the more noble Dispositions of it, as the grossest Debauchery and greatest Libertinism, which Men usually run into, do. The Scriptures, therefore, represent not only one Species of Vice, but Vice in general, as destructive of the Freedom, Life, and Happiness of the Soul; speaking of Sinners of all Sorts, *as dead in Trespasses and Sins, as sold under Sin, as the Servants of Sin, as groaning under the Body of Death, and as held in Captivity to the Law of Sin and Death.* But nothing,  
 it

it is certain, brings greater Desolation into SERM.  
the Mind, and more entirely extinguishes X.  
all the Principles of a spiritual and divine   
Life in us, than a Habit of gross Debauchery, and a Course of unbounded lawless  
Pleasure. The first Steps that a Man takes  
in this Course, shock the whole Frame of  
his Mind, and farther Advances quite destroy the Tenor of it, and throw it into a  
State of great Depravation, and the most  
miserable Confusion and Distraction, presenting us with the Absurdity and Grievance,  
which *Solomon* complains of, in a higher Sense indeed than he intended, of  
*Servants riding upon Horses, and Princes* Ecclef. x.  
*walking like Servants on the Earth; I mean* <sup>17.</sup>  
the higher Powers of the Soul degraded,  
its amiable Affections perverted, or suppressed, and its lowest Appetites assuming  
the Prerogative of being the Guides of Life,  
and grown strong enough to check and controul its superior Faculties, and carrying  
Men to the most unbecoming and fatal Conduct, and rendering the Attainment of  
those Virtues, which are the Glory and Happiness of their Nature, altogether impracticable to them. For how is it possible that the Love of God, and those other sublime Affections, which we are to exercise



SERM. cise towards that most excellent and adora-

X. ble Being, can have any place in a Soul  
under the Power of the lowest sensual De-  
fires, and an unrestrained Love of vain fan-  
tastick Gratifications. As soon may *Light*

2 Cor. vi.

14.

Jam. iii.

11.

*and Darkneſs agree, or, a Fountain ſend forth at the ſame Place, ſweet Water and bitter,* as Diſpoſitions of ſo contrary a Nature be found in the ſame Subject. And as to the Offices which we owe to Society; how can that Man be capable of diſcharging them with any Punctuality, whoſe ruling Paſſions all terminate in himſelf, who looks no farther than the pleaſing his own Appetite and Fancy? Or, if at any Time he ſhould be diſpoſed to ſerve the Publick, or his Friends, how eaſily may he be ſtopped, and diverted from an Employment which is not at all ſuited to his Taſte, and in which he could have but very little Satisfaction? Beſides that his luxurious and vain Life may eaſily reduce him to ſuch Circumſtances, however opulent and plentiful his Fortune in the World may be, as will force him to neglect the Acts, not only of Generoſity and Benevolence, but even of common Juſtice and fair Dealing. And laſtly, as to the Cultivation of the Mind, or the Improvement of it in thoſe Qualities  
which

which are the Foundation of our Perfection and Happiness ; it is plain that nothing can be a greater Hindrance to this, or rather a more certain and necessary Cause of the contrary, than a voluptuous and dissolute Course of Life : For it suppresses or stifles all those very Faculties and Affections of our Minds, whereby alone we are capable of any real Merit or Excellence, and in the due Regulation and Exercise of which our true Felicity consists ; and exalts those Appetites and Passions in us, which, in their best State, are the Marks of our Frailty and Infirmary, and which, in that unruly Condition, into which this Course of Life puts them, are our great Ignominy and Reproach, and a Source of infinite Harm and Misery to us ; as they sink us below our Rank in the Creation, damp every Thing that is generous or great in our Nature, fill us with the meanest Notions and Views, and hold us in the most abject Slavery ; and as they deprive us of the most noble and durable Pleasures of Virtue, and instead thereof, give us only false and deceitful Joys, which continue but for a Moment ; which are for the most part accompanied with many great Inconveniencies at present, the Loss of Health, Fortune, and Character ;

SERM.  
X.

SERM. Sloth, Indolence, and an Incapacity for all  
 X. Affairs of any Consequence in Life; and  
 which must certainly at last issue in utter  
 Confusion and Shame, and the most grievous  
 Remorse and Anguish.

There are indeed Degrees in this Degeneracy and Corruption of the Mind, which a licentious Course produces: The Beginnings of it, for the most part, communicate only a small Infection to the Soul, and such as might be easily cured by Watchfulness and Care; but when Men are at no Pains to restrain their Desires, and to make a timely Retreat, but run on headlong in their libertine and extravagant Course, their Conduct must as certainly be attended with the Oppression and Lethargy of their intellectual and moral Powers, the Extinction of their more noble Affections, the Loss of every worthy and manly Sentiment, and the most wretched Lowness and Baseness of Mind, as any malignant incurable Dis-temper in the Blood, must be followed with the Weakness and Pain, with the languishing and Death of the Body. Our Saviour has given us a very lively Representation of the fatal Tendency of a Life of immoderate Pleasure to destroy and kill the Soul, in his Parable of the *Prodigal*, who  
 by



by abandoning himself to Riot, and all SERMON  
Kinds of Debauchery, soon lost both the X.

Understanding and Heart of a Man, and brought himself into the most contemptible and miserable State, in which human Nature could possibly be; and our Lord afterwards speaking of his Recovery from this most deplorable Condition, described it under the Notion of a spiritual Resurrection;

*He was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and* Luke xv. 24.  
*is found.* Nor is this Notion peculiar to

the sacred Writings: The old *Philosophers* frequently speak of Habits of Sensuality and Voluptuousness, as the Diseases and Death of the Soul; as Things which enervate, impair, and enslave its Powers; and which, if not corrected and removed, must at long-run, render it quite impotent to all virtuous Exercises, and incapable of all rational and manly Enjoyments.

The Observations and Reflections which occur upon this Subject, are these following.

1. That it must not be inferred from any Thing that has been said, that all our Desires of Pleasure are absolutely criminal and unlawful, or that it is any part of our Duty, as Men and Christians, to lead a Life of rigid Abstemiousness, and of harsh and painful

SERM. painful Mortification. There are Extremes

X. in almost every Thing, and it is the Unhappiness of Mankind, from a Sense of the Mischiefs and Inconveniencies of some one, to run precipitately and blindly into another, attended, perhaps, with as great Evils, as those they designed to avoid. It is plain, that many Persons, whose natural Temper is probably dark and severe, observing the terrible Destruction, which a Course of irregular and extravagant Pleasure brings upon the Virtue and Happiness of Men, have grown fond of a quite opposite sort of Life, and so have thrown up the most innocent Enjoyments of the World, and gone into a State of voluntary Poverty, and submitted to cruel Pennances and Fastings, and all Kinds of bodily Rigours and Austerities; imagining this to be the most acceptable Way of serving God, and the best Proof of the Strength of their religious Principles and Dispositions. But surely there cannot well be a greater Mistake and Absurdity, than to think that the wise and good Author of Nature, after having provided a great Variety of Objects for pleasing our bodily Senses and Appetites, should either deny, or grudge us the Enjoyment of them; or, that we can honour and please him by

a scornful or fullen Rejection of his Gifts, SERM.  
or refusing to use them in the Order and X.  
Proportion, in which he intended them for

our Support and Comfort. It is certain, that none of the various Kinds of Pleasure with which the World abounds, that none even of our merely sensitive Gratifications, are in every Instance and Degree unlawful: All of them indeed may be grossly corrupted and abused, but they may likewise be commendably, or at least innocently enjoyed; and it is the Business of the superior Powers of our Nature, to point out to us the allowed and just Use of them, and to prevent our transgressing the Bounds of Reason and Religion, in the Acquisition and Enjoyment of them. And if we will but follow the Directions of our Conscience and Reason in this Matter, we shall always pursue and use all sensitive Goods, and all external Advantages, with an Affection so proportioned to the true Value of them, and so strictly subordinated to our Desires of Virtue, and the Divine and permanent Joys which spring from thence, as will secure our Conduct from an Imputation of Immorality, and render it quite unnecessary, in order to preserve our Innocence, and arrive at the higher Degrees of Reli-



SERM. gious Perfection, to renounce the World;  
X. and to betake ourselves to a recluse and austere Life. The Truth is, this sort of Life is so far from having any extraordinary Merit in it, that it is a sure Indication of the Weakness and Impotency of our Spirits, and of their being under the Power of some unbecoming and unmanly Affections; and is so far from adorning and recommending Religion, that it gives it a most disagreeable and forbidding Aspect, and deters Multitudes from it, who judging of it from the Effect which they see it to have on many of the greatest Pretenders to it, conclude that it is destructive of the Happiness of Mankind, and designed for a Grievance and Punishment to them: Not but that it may be very prudent, and even necessary to abridge ourselves frequently in the Use of the most innocent sensual Gratifications; that by this Means we may render the Renunciation of all Pleasures of this Kind more easy and practicable, in case, either our Duty to God, or any important Services which we may owe to our Country, or our Friends, required such a Sacrifice at our Hands; and for confirming ourselves in a stronger Habit of Moderation and Temperance with respect to these Enjoyments.

But to affect the Severity of a State of great S E R M.  
and constant Mortification, as if there were X.  
something peculiarly excellent in it, and  
desirable for its own Sake, argues at the  
least, an injudicious Mind, void of all ra-  
tional Apprehensions of Religion and the  
Duties of Man, and infatuated by  
some low Superstition, or extravagant En-  
thusiasm.

2. From what has been said, we may  
see how very much mistaken those Persons  
are, who have a high Opinion of the  
Excellence and Happiness of a Life of  
inordinate Pleasure. There is hardly any  
Vice which has not some specious Colours  
thrown upon it, to hide its Deformity, and  
make it sit the more upon the Mind. And it is certain that the plea-  
surable Vices, as they are accounted, have  
been as artfully varnished over by the de-  
lusive Imaginations of Men, as any others  
whatsoever: They have been represented  
as *Sociableness and good Nature, Politeness  
and good Breeding, Manliness and Galantry  
of Spirit, an elegant and delicate Enjoyment  
of Life.* And not only have the Men of  
Pleasure themselves been intoxicated with  
these Notions, but some others also, who  
are far enough from their Course and Man-

SERM. ner of Life, have, from Want of Reflection; or some particular Gloominess of  
 X. Temper, made them some unwary Concessions; as if abstracting from Futurity, and so far as relates to this World, their Condition was to be envied, and the Part which they acted, was the wisest and happiest that could be chosen by them. But for whatever Reasons Men may think favourably of a Life of Pleasure, their Judgment of it is plainly rash and ill-grounded; as it is impossible that any thing tending to the Perfection, Ornament, and Happiness of the human Nature, can be built upon the Ruins of the noble Powers and amiable Affections of that Nature; as it is certain, on the contrary, that the unavoidable Consequences of suffering our Powers of Conscience and Reason to lose their Authority, and to be trampled upon by any of our inferior Appetites and Passions, must be Baseness, Impotency, and Slavery of Mind, together with Disgrace and Contempt, Uneasiness, and Misery. Nor will it be sufficient to object here, that the Men addicted to a Life of Pleasure, are often Persons of great Justice, Truth, Humanity, Friendship, and Generosity, and appear to be the most gay, easy, and satisfied of all Men: For though  
 it



it must be allowed, that several of them, whose natural Dispositions prompt them strongly to the Practice of the social Virtues, do in many Cases, where their favourite Passions are not interested, and while they have made no great Progress in Voluptuousness, behave very commendably and well; yet they are always destitute of that Integrity of Heart, of that uniform Regard to the Objects morally good and excellent, which is necessary to the forming of a truly worthy and manly Character; and as the Love of vicious Pleasures increases in them, all their good Affections are gradually declining, and it but seldom happens, that they are not at last ready to sacrifice all Regards to Morality, and to act the most unjust, treacherous, and cruel Part that can be, whenever the Obtaining the Gratification of their Desires, makes it necessary to them to do so. And as to the Happiness which these Men boast of; it must be considered, that the Happiness of a Man is not to be judged of, from the Openness of his Countenance, and the Gaiety of his Behaviour in publick Places; nor from an occasional Flow of Spirits, and noisy Laughter and Mirth; nor yet from the momentary Transports of some

SERM. sensual Delights: True Happiness is a very  
X. solid and substantial Thing, and as the Seat  
of it is within, it arises only from Affec-  
tions justly ballanced, and operating in a  
due Proportion towards their respective Ob-  
jects, under the Inspection and Influence of  
our moral and rational Faculties; from a  
Mind quite composed and easy within itself,  
which is able to take a Review of its own  
Actions with Approbation, and to look up  
to the Supreme Arbiter of its Fate with  
Confidence and Joy. Now with respect  
to this, which is the Principal, or rather  
the only Happiness of a Man, it is evident,  
that the Men who pursue a voluptuous and  
libertine Life, must be in a great measure,  
or altogether Strangers to it; since there is  
hardly any thing to be found in their Minds,  
but Disorder and Confusion, exorbitant Pas-  
sions and restless Desires; and if at any time  
they happen to be grave and thoughtful, Dis-  
turbance and Fear, Remorse and Self-con-  
demnation. So that under whatever plausible  
Appearances a Life of Pleasure may be  
set out and recommended, it must be far  
from being an Object either of Admiration,  
or Envy, to a considerate Man. The Per-  
sons who run into it, whatever good Opi-  
nion they may have of their own State,  
have

have really got a Plague, which preys SERM.  
upon and consumes their very Vitals, and X.  
may, in the midst of all the Glare and  
Splendor, with which they are sometimes  
surrounded, be fitly compared, according  
to our Saviour's Similitude, to *Sepulchres* Mat. xxiii.  
finely polished and adorned without, while <sup>27.</sup>  
within they are full of Corruption and  
Rottenness.

3. From what has been discoursed, we  
may see a very just and plain Reason for  
the severe Threatnings of Christianity, a-  
gainst the Voluptuousness and Debauchery  
of Mankind. In the several Catalogues, or  
Enumerations, which the Sacred Writers  
give us of those Sins or Vices, which are  
inconsistent with Religion, and exclude  
Men from the Kingdom of Heaven, the  
Crimes which proceed from an immoderate  
Love of Pleasure are always inserted. It is  
not necessary to recite particular Passages to  
shew this to be the Case; all who are in  
any measure acquainted with the New Tes-  
tament, must know that it is so, and that  
St. *Paul* particularly has frequently decla-  
red, that they who commit such Crimes,  
*shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Now  
this has appeared to be a very harsh Doc-  
trine, to several Persons, who are not at all



SERM. insensible of the Difference between Virtue

X. and Vice, in general, and of the Merit of the one, and the Ill-desert of the other; who profess to hate the Vices of Dishonesty and Fraud, Oppression, and Tyranny, Uncharitableness, and Cruelty, and acknowledge it to be *very meet and right* in the Governor of the World, to animadvert severely upon them: But as for the Sins of Debauchery, which imply no Malice or Ill-will, as they suppose, and are only the Excesses of our softer Passions and Inclinations, they can see no great Evil in these, and think, that if there be any Guilt in them, it is only in a small Degree, and that they are to be considered, as the Frailties and Infirmities of the human Nature, which call for the Compassion and easy Forgiveness of our Maker, rather than as flagrant Enormities, which are to expose Men to the final Condemnation of God, and deprive them of the Happiness of another World. But all Cavils and Objections against this Part of the Gospel-Constitution must immediately vanish, if we reflect on the pernicious Effects which Vices of this Sort have on the Minds of Men; how they degrade and enslave our governing Faculties, and pervert and debase our generous Instincts

Instincts and Affections; how they divert SERM.  
us from the proper Employments of in- X.

telligent and moral Agents, and, so far as  
their Influence extends, render us quite in-  
capable of these Employments, and conse-  
quently of the Happiness which results from  
them. So that by indulging ourselves in  
extravagant Pleasures, and suffering Habits  
of Luxury and Debauchery to prevail and  
grow in us, we effectually disqualify our-  
selves for the sublime Enjoyments of a fu-  
ture State, which are to be the Fruits and  
Rewards of Improvements in Wisdom and  
Virtue, of well exercised moral Powers,  
and of Affections duly disciplined and cul-  
tivated in this World; and therefore, if  
what the Objection says, was true, though  
it is very far from being so, that these Vices  
implied no Ill-will to Society, yet they al-  
ways in Time breed so much Blindness and  
Stupidity of Mind, and so much Corruption  
and Putrefaction of Heart in those who  
are accustomed to them, as will insuperably  
bar their Entrance into the Kingdom of  
Heaven, and even lay the Foundation of  
the most exquisite Distress and Torment to  
them. The Sentence, therefore, which  
the Gospel pronounces against Men of dis-  
solute and debauched Lives, is plainly and  
perfectly

SERM. perfectly just; as it is agreeable to the natural Constitution and Order of Things, and appoints no other Punishment to them, than what must come upon them, in Consequence of their gross Depravations and Corruptions.

X.

4. Lastly, we may here see the Necessity of withstanding all Allurements and Temptations to a Life of licentious Pleasure. If the Apprehension of Danger will Alarm us in any Case, it may certainly do so in this, where our greatest, our everlasting Interest is at Stake. There is indeed sufficient Cause for watching against every kind of Vice, on Account of its destructive Tendency; but there is a particular Reason for Standing upon our Guard against Voluptuousness; because as it has as ruinous Consequences as any Vice, so it is, perhaps, of all Vices the most insinuating and ensnaring: For our Inclinations to Pleasure being among the strongest Propensities of our Nature, and it being plainly just and reasonable to indulge and gratify them within certain Bounds and Measures, we are very apt, from the innocent and justifiable Gratifications of them, to slide insensibly into those which are criminal and immoral; and it is not at all improbable but that many having once tasted the intoxicating Cup,  
will



will be for taking a larger and deeper SERM.  
Draught, and so proceed, till they have X.  
stupified their Powers, and are bereft of  
every worthy Sentiment and Principle, and  
*given over to vile Affections, and a reprobate* Rom. i.  
*Mind.* This is the Course, which too strong 26, 28.  
a Desire of Pleasure has been known to  
take, in innumerable Instances. It con-  
cerns all Men, therefore, and especially  
those, whose Age, Temper, and Situation  
in the World, expose them more particu-  
larly to the Solicitations of Pleasure, to  
guard strictly against the Attacks of this  
subtil and dangerous Enemy, *which has cast* Prov. vii.  
*down many wounded, and by which many* 26.  
*strong Men have been slain.* And as the  
only sure Armour of Defence in this War-  
fare, is an habitual Temperance, with res-  
pect to all sensitive Enjoyments, and all  
the good Things of this World, let us take  
Care to acquire and cultivate this Virtue by  
all proper Means; by attending diligently  
to the several Motions of our Appetites and  
Passions, and refusing steadily to gratify  
them, however violent and craving, till we  
are authorized by the calm Judgment of  
our superior Powers to do so; by abstaining  
from all Indulgences which would inflame  
our Desires, and limiting ourselves in the  
Use

SERM. Use even of many innocent Gratifications ;

X. by affecting our Minds with a strong Sense  
 of the small Importance of the most refined outward Delights, to a Man of a correct Judgment, who is provided with all the Necessaries, and the common Accommodations and Comforts of Life, and of the great Risque which the Person always runs, who has an Affluence of such Enjoyments ; by avoiding, as much as we can, all Places and Companies, where we may be in Danger of falling into any Excess or Debauchery, and using great Caution when, at any Time, we happen to be in them ; by shunning a State of Idleness and Sloth, which relaxes all the Powers both of the Mind and Body, and gives rise to many loose and mischievous Passions ; and, lastly, by calling down into our Hearts, in the Exercise of a sincere and humble Devotion, the Influence of the Divine Spirit, which will enable us to purify our Minds, and to  
*subdue the Flesh, with all its Affections and Lusts.*

Gal. v.  
 24.

S E R-

# SERMON XI.

Of Meekness and Quietness of Spirit.

I PETER III. 4.

— *A meek and quiet Spirit, which is in the Sight of God of great Price.*

**T**HE Connexion and immediate De-  
 sign of these Words is this : St. Peter  
 having in the foregoing Chapter ex-  
 horted all Christians in general to Obedi-  
 ence to their civil Governors, and Servants  
 particularly to the Subjection which they  
 owed to their Masters, proceeds at the be-  
 ginning of this, to press upon Wives a Sub-  
 mission to their Husbands, in all lawful  
 and reasonable Things ; and as an Induce-  
 ment to this Behaviour, he suggests to them  
 that it might be a very probable Means of  
 bringing over such of their Husbands as  
 were unconverted, to the sincere Profession  
 and

SERM.  
XI.



SERM. and Practice of Christianity, when they  
 XI. observed the good Effect which this Religion had upon their Minds; after which he goes on to advise them, to recommend themselves always to their Husbands, and all about them, not so much by outward Gaiety, and adventitious Ornaments, such as *plaiting the Hair, and wearing of Gold, and fine Apparel*; as by the substantial and incorruptible Beauties of the Mind, particularly by the *Ornament of a meek, quiet, and sweet Temper*, a Thing which infinitely surpasses all external Splendor, and artificial Accomplishments, and which will render them very lovely and estimable, in the Eyes not only of Men, but of God himself. This is the immediate View of St. Peter in these Words.

But though the Spirit which is here, recommended by the Apostle, is more particularly becoming that part of the human Species, who are peculiarly formed for the Exercise of the gentler and softer Affections, yet as it is an Ornament of our Nature in general, and necessary to be acquired by every one of us, I shall, according to this more extensive View of it, treat of it in the following Discourse: In which I propose to consider, *First*, What is implied in this

*meek*

*meek and quiet Spirit*, which St. Peter here recommends. *Secondly*, The Reasons why we should acquire and cultivate this Temper. *Thirdly*, The Methods of forming and raising it in us. After which, I shall conclude with a Reflection or two upon this Subject.

SERM.  
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I I shall consider what is implied in a *meek and quiet Spirit*. And for explaining this, we must observe that the Class of our Affections which are called the *irascible*, such as Impatience of Suffering, Indignation, Resentment, and the like, having for their Object, the Avoidance or Removal of Pain, and the Prevention or Redress of Injuries, are laid very strong in our Nature, as it is indeed necessary they should be, in order to their attaining their Ends; and as the Commotions of them are frequently so violent, that they are apt to over-power our rational Faculties, and to hurry us into very unjustifiable Measures, they are ballanced, (which is the Case of almost all the strong Affections in the human Constitution) by Dispositions of a contrary Direction and Tendency; and from the joint Effect of these opposite Principles, the Beauty and Order of this Part of our Frame result.

Now

SERM. Now the Counterpoise to our *irascible* Passions, are, in some Instances, a Respect or Reverence for the Appointments of Providence, and, in others, Compassion and Benevolence towards Mankind ; which are not to eradicate any of our natural Feelings, to take away our Dislike and Aversion to Pain, or to render us insensible to Acts of Iniquity and Cruelty, and to suppress intirely our Indignation and Resentment against them ; but which leaving us sensible of the natural Evils which befall us, and to do whatever we justly can to remove them, are to make us bear them, while they continue, with a decent Submission ; and which allowing us to conceive a Hatred of Injustice and Inhumanity, and to express a becoming Indignation against them, are to curb the Violence, and prevent the Excesses of these Affections, and always dispose us to consult the Peace and Happiness of Society, and to live on Terms of Love and Friendship with all about us. When these Principles operate in this Manner, they produce in us, that Temper of Meekness, Gentleness, and Quietness, which the Apostle here requires : As will appear, from considering particularly the several Things which are comprehended in it.



1. One Thing included in this Temper, SERM.  
XI.  
is a calm Submission under the merely natural Evils and Calamities which we meet with in the World. As these come to pass in Consequence of a general Constitution or Plan, which has been formed and fixed by infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and are all ordered both for the common Good of Mankind, and the Benefit of the particular Persons to whom they happen, there is none who seriously considers this, and has any command of his Passions, who will not acquiesce in them, without murmuring and complaining. Indeed there cannot be a greater Indication of a turbulent, restless, and impatient Spirit, as well as of the Want of a due Reverence for the supreme Wisdom and Excellence, than to repine at the Afflictions which come upon us in the natural Order and Course of Things, and to censure the Dispensations of Providence, as unjust or unkind, when Events do not always fall out according to our Desires, and answer our Expectations. A Man of a meek composed Mind, though he will use all proper Means for averting, or removing, Distresses and Calamities, yet, will be always ready to receive Evil at the Hand of God, as well as he receives Good; and when

S E R M. he smarts under the sharpest Pain, will be

XI. far from *charging God foolishly*, but gently  
 Job i. 22. resign himself to the Divine Correction,  
 supporting his Spirit with this Considera-

1 Sam. iii. tion, *It is the Lord, let him do what seem-*  
 18. *eth him good*; and when he is most desirous

of Relief from his Afflictions, he will al-  
 ways ask it, with the Reserve, of its being  
 consistent with the wise and gracious De-  
 signs of the Divine Government; saying,  
 after the amiable Example of our Saviour,  
 Luke Father, *if thou be willing, remove this Cup*  
 xxii. 42. *from me; nevertheless, not my Will, but*  
*thine be done.*

2. Another Thing comprehended in a  
*meek and quiet Spirit*, is a Moderation of  
 our Anger and Resentment upon Occasion  
 of moral Wrongs, or Injuries. It is plain  
 that we are very differently affected with  
 mere Harms and Sufferings, which are the  
 Consequences only of the natural Constitu-  
 tion of the World, or of the Ignorance and  
 Inadvertence of Men; and with those Evils,  
 which we call Injuries, which we appre-  
 hend to flow from some iniquitous or bad  
 Dispositions of rational and moral Agents,  
 whether they affect the Publick, or Our-  
 selves. The former, whenever we act as  
 becomes us, we bear with no other Senti-  
 ments

ments and Dispositions, than those of Calm-SERM.  
ness, Patience, and Submission: But the XI.

latter, though we are to submit to them too, so far as we are Sufferers by them, as Events which befall us by the Direction of a wise and just Providence; yet, always kindle our Anger, or Resentment. And indeed it may be very proper to give Way to this Passion in some Measure: For Anger is far from being, in every Instance, and Degree, sinful. It is one of our natural Affections, and implanted in us for very wise and useful Purposes; for rendering us formidable to those who would unjustly attack us, and preventing the Execution of their mischievous Designs; for correcting the Tempers of the Injurious themselves, and obliging them to a Reparation of the Damages sustained through their Means; and for bringing them, when their Crimes are notorious, and publickly offensive, to that exemplary Punishment, which it is necessary for the common Benefit of the World, they should undergo. And whoever is conscious of exercising his Indignation and Resentment only so far as is requisite for these Purposes, may be sure that he is acting not only an innocent, but a worthy and generous Part. But as our Resent-



SERM. ment, especially when it takes its Rise from  
 XI. a Sense of private Wrongs, is apt to be attended with very strong Emotions, and to carry us precipitately into the worst Conduct, which is often destructive both to others and ourselves, nothing is to be more diligently watched than its Progress, and more carefully guarded against than its Extravagancies. And the *Meekness and Quietness of our Spirits* most eminently appear in the Restraint and due Government of this Passion; in hindering its Rising without a sufficient Cause, and its discovering itself, whatever Cause may be given for it, in any unseemly Transports and Effects; in preventing its continuing so long, and returning so often, as to corrupt our Tempers, by its settling, either in habitual Peevishness and Frowardness; or in Rancour and Revenge, and a Disposition *to return Evil for Evil*; and in suppressing it intirely, as soon as the natural and just Ends, for which we give way to this Passion, have been obtained. These are the proper and natural Effects of a meek and quiet Temper; contrary to the Behaviour of those who are fierce and boisterous, quick to take Offence, and by every trifling Provocation are blown into a Flame, and who in all Cases of Injury,

jury, whether it be great or small, vent SERM.  
themselves in Rage and Fury; or, who are XI.  
for ever querulous and sour, uneasy and  
discontented, repeating and aggravating the  
ill Usage and Affronts which they have re-  
ceived; and are full of Bitterness and Spite,  
plainly shewing that they aim at none of  
the justifiable Ends of Resentment, but are  
intent on the mere Harm, or Ruin of  
the Persons who offend them. These are  
Things which are utterly inconsistent with  
a meek, calm, and composed State of Mind,  
and can be found only in a Man, who *has* Prov. xxv.  
28.  
*no Rule over his own Spirit, and is like a  
City that is broken down, and without Walls.*

3. A *meek and quiet Spirit* farther im-  
plies a sincere Desire of the Harmony and  
Happiness of Society, and a Disposition to  
cultivate Peace and Friendship with all  
about us. To a Man in whom this Spirit  
strongly prevails, nothing can be more  
harsh, and disagreeable, than Feuds and  
Factions, Contentions and Animosities, whe-  
ther publick, or private: To engage in  
these, would be contrary both to the Sense  
which he has of his Duty, as a Man, and  
a Christian, and to the natural Turn and  
Temper of his Mind. He will, therefore,  
be far from embarking with any Party, or

SERM. endeavouring to embroil the Affairs of the

XI. Publick, under any plausible Pretences, only  
to work himself and his Associates into  
Stations of Power, or Wealth; and as he  
will not be a Disturber of Society, from  
any ambitious, or interested Views of his  
own; so neither will he be drawn into any  
seditious Practices, by the Artifice of others,  
who act from such Views or Motives: He  
will not have an implicit Confidence in any  
political Leaders, but will carefully ex-  
amine their Reports and Representations of  
Persons and Things, before he suffers them  
to make an Impression on him; being ever  
ready to pay all due Respect to lawful Au-  
thority, to put a candid Construction on  
those Actions of his Governors which may  
appear doubtful, to censure the smaller  
Mistakes of their Administration with Gen-  
tleness, and to correct and redress the more  
grievous Errors of it, if such are at any  
Time to be found, not in a mere Spirit of  
Opposition and Contradiction, but in the  
Uprightness of his Heart, and from a real  
Concern for securing and establishing the  
publick Tranquillity and Welfare. And as  
a Man of a meek and peaceable Temper  
will thus study the Order and Happiness  
of the Community of which he is a Mem-  
ber;



ber; so will he likewise consult the Quiet SERM.  
and Ease of the particular Persons with XI.

whom he has any Intercourse, and endeavour to be on good Terms with all around him. For this Purpose, he will take care to perform the Duties which he owes to Men, according to their various Ranks and Relations; chearfully paying a just Honour, and respectful Submission to his Superiors; treating his Equals, with Affability, Courtesy, and Modesty; and his Inferiors, with Equity and Kindness, Tenderness and Condescension; and will behave towards all in general, not only without Offence, but with Good-will and Humanity. He will be particularly cautious in Points, from whence Animosities and Differences among Men are apt to arise; such as intermeddling unnecessarily in the Affairs of others, the Prying into their Secrets, the Giving Ear to Calumnies and Whispers against them, and the Divulging rashly what he may have heard to the Disadvantage of their Characters. He will by no Means impose his own Sentiments, either in religious, or civil Matters, upon those he converses with, as the Terms of Concord and Union with him; but will allow all Men the free Exercise of their own Judgment and Under-

SERM. standing, and value them, not so much for  
XI. any Notions and Opinions which they may  
have, as for partaking of those good Qualities and Dispositions of Mind, which are the chief Excellencies of the human Nature, and the highest Accomplishments of a Christian. He will not, without a very just Cause, appear to be affronted or disoblighd, but will make Allowances for the Prejudices and Weaknesses of Men, and always put the best Interpretation on the Conduct of his Neighbours towards him which it will bear; and when he is sensible that he has been ill used, he will be *easy to be intreated*, and reconciled to those who have offended him, upon any equitable Acknowledgment and Reparation; and even willing to depart from his Right in some Instances, and to give up some Points of Form and Ceremony, rather than to keep up Resentment, and perpetuate a Quarrel. Prudence indeed must direct him how far he is to proceed in the Concessions and Condescensions which he makes to an Adversary, and to make them in such a Way, as not to lay himself open to new Rudenesses and Insults by his Lenity and Forbearance; and so as that they may appear to flow, not from a Meanness of Mind,  
or

or the Want of Spirit in him; but from SERMON the Goodness and Generosity of his Heart, XI. and his sincere Love of Peace. But with these Cautions, a Man of a composed, meek, and quiet Disposition, would certainly chuse to submit to some Inconveniences, rather than to live in a State of Discord and Enmity, or even of Shyness and Coolness with his Neighbours.

II. I shall now consider the Reasons, why we should acquire and cultivate this Temper, which *St. Peter* recommends to us.

1. The Apostle himself suggests an Argument of great Weight to this Purpose in the Text, taken from the Intrinsic Dignity and Value of a meek and quiet Temper, *which, he tells us, is of great Price in the Sight of God.* It is one of those Things which are *lovely and of good Report*, which is *both approved by Men, and acceptable to God.* We find that we are so made, that we cannot but admire and love it; and as God, who has endowed us with the Power of discerning its Excellence, must know the Worth of it more accurately, he will still in a higher Degree approve of it. Indeed the partaking eminently of this Temper



SERM. Temper, argues a peculiar Force and Great-  
XI. ness of Mind, and a most noble Constitu-  
tion of Soul; for our Sense of Evil and  
Suffering, and particularly of the more  
grievous moral Evils being very acute and  
lively, and the Passions which arise from  
thence, being among the most powerful  
and impetuous Principles in our Nature,  
the Man who has all these under such an  
habitual good Governance, that he is not  
led by them, into either any Immorality,  
or any Indecency, is certainly possessed of  
an uncommon Strength of Mind, and is  
arrived at a great Perfection in Virtue. He  
shews that he has established his moral and  
rational Faculties in the Supreme Com-  
mand, as they ought to be, within him;  
that he can exercise the several Powers and  
Principles in his Nature in the justest Or-  
der, and that he is in the Way of making  
a continual Progress in Goodness; in short,  
that he has accomplished the most glorious  
and heroic Work of which a Man is capa-  
ble. For a Victory over our own Passions,  
in regard both of the Principles from which  
it springs, and the Zeal, Perseverance, and  
Activity of Mind, which are implied in it,  
is plainly the greatest and most honourable  
of all Atchievements. *Solomon*, therefore,  
very

very justly prefers the Person who governs SERM.  
his Anger and Resentment, to any of the XI.

great Conquerors of the World. *He that* Prov. xvi.  
*is slow to Anger, says he, is better than the* 32.

*Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than*  
*he that taketh a City.* Whereas, in the

Judgment of the same *Solomon*, the Want  
of a due Command of the Passions, is a  
clear Indication of an impotent and deformed,

and a ruinous and desolate State of  
Mind: *He that hath no Rule over his own* Prov. xxv.  
*Spirit, says he, is like a City that is broken* 28.

*down, and without Walls.* If, therefore,  
we would aspire to the Exercise of the most  
generous and perfect Virtue; if we would  
be reputed Persons of noble and great  
Minds, and procure ourselves Esteem and  
Honour from Mankind; above all, if we  
are desirous of that truest Honour which  
cometh from God himself, and would be  
entitled to his Approbation; let us take  
Care to acquire and raise in ourselves a meek  
and gentle, a quiet and peaceable Disposition;  
and never imagine, as many foolishly do,  
that strong Resentment, and a turbulent  
Behaviour in the Case of every little  
Offence, or Affront, that may be offered to  
us, can be an Argument of the Generosity,  
Fortitude, and Manliness of our Souls;

The

SERM. The Impatience and Uneasiness which  
 XI. we express, the Confusion and Precipitancy with which we act, and the unjust or cruel Things which we often do upon such an Occasion, sufficiently discover the Weakness and Disorder of our Minds, and must make our Conduct, instead of being honourable, to appear very mean and despicable, in the Eyes both of God, and of all wise Men.

2. Let us consider the Importance of a meek and peaceable Spirit in Religion, and its Necessity for our obtaining the Mercy and Forgiveness of God. Religion is evidently intended for the Benefit of Mankind: The Business of it, therefore, is to inculcate upon us universal Justice, Meekness, Gentleness, Forgiveness, Peaceableness, and Benevolence, from the Exercise of which the Happiness of Men proceeds. The Practice of these Virtues was always essential to true Religion, and by far the most acceptable Service that could be offered to the great and good Creator of all Things. But yet, it is certain that some of them, as particularly, Meekness, Gentleness, and Forgiveness, in the Case of Injuries and Offences, were too much neglected both by the *Jews* and *Heathens*;  
 and



and therefore, when our Saviour came to SERM.  
XI.  
institute a new Dispensation of Religion, he

took a great deal of Pains in urging these Duties upon his Followers. He began his

Discourse upon the Mount, with declaring the peculiar Blessedness of an humble, meek,

merciful, and peaceable Temper: And he has every where laid the greatest Stress upon

the Exercise of Gentleness, Patience, and Forgiveness towards those who offend us.

In the short Prayer which he prescribed for the Use of his Disciples, he has directed

us to ask *the Forgiveness of our Offences against God*, only in like Manner, *as we*

*forgive every one, his Brother, his Offences and Trespasses*; and in the Words immediately following that Prayer, he has as-

sured us, that *if we forgive Men their Tres-* Matt. vi.

*passes, our heavenly Father will also forgive* <sup>14. 15.</sup>

*us*; whereas, *if we forgive not Men their Trespasses, neither will God* be moved by

any Intreaties *to forgive ours*. And in ano- — v. 23.

ther Place, he tells us, that God will re- <sup>24.</sup>

ceive no Offering at our Hands, while we have any Malice or Ill-will in our Hearts

to our Brethren; but that we must be reconciled to them, and disposed to live on

Terms of Peace and Charity with them, before our religious Services will be ac-

cepted.

SERM. cepted. And agreeably to this Doctrine

XI. delivered by our Saviour himself, St. Paul

teaches us, that the Temper which becomes *the Elect People of God*, (by whom he means all professed Christians) is made up of *Mercy, Humility, Kindness, Meek-*

Col. iii. *ness, Long-suffering, Forbearance, Forgiveness, Charity, and Peaceableness.* And St. James tells us, that *the Wisdom which is from above*, and with which Christianity

Jam. iii. *inspires all its true Professors, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits.* And

— ii. he declares, that the *Man shall have Judgment without Mercy, who hath shewed no Mercy.* This, surely, may convince us, that a meek, forgiving, quiet Spirit, is absolutely necessary to our answering the Intention of Religion, and obtaining the Advantages of it: If we will be determined by the positive and express Declarations of our Lord and his Apostles, we must conclude, that a fierce, revengeful, and turbulent Disposition is utterly inconsistent with the Character of true Christians, and cuts off all Expectation of the Rewards which belong to such.

3. Another Argument to make us acquire and cultivate a Spirit of Meekness and Quietness,

Quietness, may be brought from the great SERM.  
Examples of God's Clemency and Patience, XI.

and our Saviour's meek, gentle, and peaceable Behaviour, while he was in this World. God is a Pattern of the most admirable Clemency, Long-suffering, and Forgiveness: The Character which he assumed, when he made *a Discovery of his Glory to Moses*, was *the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, and forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin.* And it is certain that he acts up to this Character, in all his Administrations towards Mankind. How patiently does he wait for the Repentance of Sinners, not being willing that any of them should perish? How does he endeavour *to overcome their Evil with his Goodness*, and to effect their Amendment by his Indulgence and Favour? He distributes the Benefits of his Sun and Rain, and all Things necessary for the Support of Life, equally to all, that by the same Dispensations of his Providence, whereby he encourages and rewards the Good, he may also reclaim the Bad. When at any Time he punishes Men, it is with a gracious Intention, for the Amendment of their Hearts, when gentler Ways

Ex. xxxiv.  
6, 7.



SERM. of dealing with them fail to produce this  
 XI. Effect. And when he saw that no other  
 Method would be so effectual for the Happiness of Sinners, he, with the most wonderful Mercy and Condescension, sent his only-begotten Son into the World, to propose and establish the Scheme for their Reconciliation and Acceptance with himself. Thus has God most remarkably expressed his Clemency, Forbearance, and Forgiveness to us all, even when we were considered *as Sinners, and Enemies to him*. And whenever we reflect upon this Conduct of the universal Governor and Father of Mankind, we cannot but greatly approve, and adore it. Is it not most becoming us then to conform ourselves to it in our own Behaviour, and to be, in our Proportion, indulgent, patient, and condescending to all, and placable and merciful to those who injure and offend us? The Excellency of the Example, and the Respect which we owe to the Deity, must be sufficient to engage us to do this: Besides that it is expressly made a part of our Duty as Christians: *Be ye perfect*, says our Saviour, *even as your Father which is in Heaven, is perfect*; by exercising your Forbearance and Charity, even towards Enemies,

Matt. v.  
48.

mies, in Imitation of the most diffusive and unlimited Goodness of God. *Lct all Bitterness and Wrath, says St Paul, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you. Be ye, therefore, the Followers of God, as dear Children.* SERM. XI.  
Ephes. iv.  
31, 32.  
— v. 1.

Our blessed Saviour has also given us a most amiable Example of Meekness and Patience, of Gentleness and Quietness in his Behaviour and Conversation upon Earth. Though our Lord was, not only perfectly innocent, but the great Benefactor of the World; yet never was any Person more abused, insulted, and injured, than he was. He was exposed to all the Variety of unrighteous Treatment; to Calumny and Misrepresentation, to Contempt and Scorn, to Persecution of all Kinds, to Death itself; all which he bore with the most perfect Patience, and the most forgiving and compassionate Disposition towards his Adversaries. For all the Indignities and Affronts, for all the Contumelies and Reproaches, that were cast upon him by his Enemies; nay, for all their most wicked Designs and Contrivances against him, du-

SERM. ring the Time of his publick Ministry, he

XI. made no other Returns than good Offices  
 of all Sorts: And when their Malice at last  
 succeeded; *he was brought*, according to

Isa. liii. 7. the ancient Prophecy concerning him, *as a*

*Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep be-*

*fore her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not*

*his Mouth*, in any rash, peevish, or unbe-

coming Expressions; he even prayed for

his Persecutors and Murderers in the midst

of his Torments; *when he was reviled by*

1 Pet. ii.

23.]

*them, he reviled not again; when he suf-*

*fered, he threatened not, but committed him-*

*self to him who judgeth righteously; and*

Ver. 21.

*herein, as St. Peter observes, he has left*

*us an Example, that we should follow his*

*Steps.* And he himself calls upon us to

imitate him, particularly in the Meekness

and Humility of his Behaviour; *Learn of*

Matt. xi.

29.

*me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly in*

2 Cor. x.

1.

*Heart.* St. Paul likewise beseeches us by the

*Meekness and Gentleness of Christ*, which

he supposes were Qualities that were very

well known to belong to him, and which

should make the deepest Impressions upon

the Hearts of all Christians. And in ano-

Col. iii.

13.

*ther Place, he exhorts us to forgive one*

*another, even as Christ hath forgiven us.*

And certainly, if we profess to be the Dis-

ciples



principles and Servants of *Christ*, we must think S E R M.  
ourselves bound, both in Duty, and De- XI.

cency, to imitate his Example. *If any* <sup>John ii.</sup>  
*Man saith he abides in him*, says St. *John*,<sup>6.</sup>  
*he ought also so to walk, even as he walked.*

*Ye call me Master and Lord*, says our Sa- <sup>John xiii.</sup>  
viour, *and ye say well, for so I am: If I*<sup>13, 14.</sup>

*then, your Lord and Master, have washed  
your Feet, ye ought also to wash one another's  
Feet.* The same Reasoning will hold with

respect to all the Virtues of which our Sa-  
viour has given us an Example; and par-  
ticularly with respect to the Virtues of  
Meekness, Gentleness, and Peaceableness in  
our whole Behaviour: *If I your Lord and  
Master*, have not thought it beneath me,  
to endure patiently the Abuses which have  
been given me in this World, and to ex-  
press always a meek, forgiving, calm, and  
quiet Temper under the highest Provo-  
cations and Offences; neither are you to  
think it unworthy of you, to do the same:

*For I have given you an Example, that ye* <sup>Ver. 15,</sup>  
*should do, as I have done to you. Verily,*<sup>16.</sup>

*verily, I say unto you, the Servant is not  
greater than his Lord, neither is he that is  
sent, greater than he that sent him.*

4. We should cultivate a *meek and quiet  
Spirit*, from a Regard to the Peace of Man-  
kind,

SERM. kind, and the Happiness of the particular

XI. Persons, with whom we have any Inter-  
 course and Conversation. It is certain that  
 the Want of this Spirit, and the Prevalence  
 of the contrary one, has been the Spring of  
 infinite Confusions and Distractions, both  
 in the publick Affairs of the World, and  
 the private Concerns of Life. What Scenes  
 of Disorder, Mischief, and Desolation have  
 the furious Motions of Anger and Wrath  
 produced? Many of the most dreadful na-  
 tional Wars have arisen from this Source.  
 And when the angry and turbulent Passions  
 of Men have not been attended with Con-  
 sequences of such universal Terror and Ruin,  
 yet what irreconcilable Jarrings and Dis-  
 cords, what immortal Hatreds and En-  
 mities, have they bred in particular Societies,  
 or Neighbourhoods, putting an utter End  
 to all friendly Correspondence among Per-  
 sons, who are obliged, in point both of Du-  
 ty and Interest, to live together in Love,  
 and involving them in Contentions, which  
 prove destructive not only to their Quiet,  
 but often to their Fortune, Health, and  
 Life itself? And how baneful are these  
 Passions to the Happiness of private Fa-  
 milies, as they render the Persons in whom  
 they prevail, perverse and froward to their  
 nearest

nearest Relations, severe and harsh to all SERM.  
under their Authority, and by this Means XI.

exasperate the Spirits of those, whom they use so ill, against themselves, till all Harmony and Love is lost among them, and their Life becomes a Scene of continual Strife and Vexation? But now, on the other hand, a Spirit of Meekness, Gentleness, and Quietness, must have quite different Effects: If this obtained universally in the World, there could be no such Things, as either publick, or private Disturbances in it; as all would abstain from wilful Injuries, and easily compromise any Differences that happened through mere Inadvertence and Mistake, and would be ever ready to oblige one another by any Expressions of Humanity, Courtesy, and Condescension in their Power. And in Fact, this Spirit, so far as it prevails, settles the Affairs of Mankind in a State of good Order, Harmony, and Peace; cementing and sweetning all Friendships; and making the Intercourse of Persons of the same Neighbourhood, or Family, in the Exchange of Civilities, and in the Discharge of the common Offices of Life, easy and agreeable; removing from their Conversation, all Fierceness of Passion, all Bitterness of Language, all Sour-



SERM. nefs and Petulance of Humour, and all the

XI. *Arrogance and Haughtiness of Pride ; softening the Minds even of the Injurious and Revengeful, and moulding them gradually into a good Temper : For nothing, it is certain, is so apt to make a violent and angry Man relent, and to melt him into Tenderness and Good-nature, as the Forbearance, Moderation, and Gentleness of the Person, against whom his Passion is raised. There are but very few who are capable of so much Wickedness, as to persist in bearing hard upon a Man, who instead of returning Evil for Evil, endeavours to gain them by Acts of Complaisance and Generosity. The Worst have usually so much Goodness, as to be sensible of Benefits, and to make some ingenuous and grateful Returns : And the greatest Part of Men, when most offended, will, undoubtedly, be intirely subdued by the discreet Condescensions of a generous Adversary, and instead of continuing in a State of Enmity to him, will become his true Friends. The Maxim of Solomon is almost always found true in Experience, *a soft Answer turneth away Wrath ; mild and gentle Words, with a condescending and obliging Behaviour, hardly fail to allay the Resentment, and**

cool

Prov. xv.  
1.

cool the Tempers of Men, and to put an SERM.  
End to those Animosities among them, XI.  
which, by any other Means, would be  
continued and encreased. Of such great  
Importance is the Prevalence of a meek,  
patient, and quiet Temper to the good  
Order of the World, and the Happiness of  
Men; and these being Things which we  
are always under the strongest Obligations  
to promote, we should take care to raise  
this Spirit in ourselves, and by our Exam-  
ple to recommend the Cultivation of it to  
others, which has so much Influence upon  
them.

5. *Lastly*, We should cultivate a meek  
and peaceable Spirit, for our own Interest  
and Satisfaction. There is hardly any thing  
that can be more prejudicial to a Man, than  
a wrathful, splenetick, froward, and turbu-  
lent Temper. This not only indisposes him  
for the serious Acts of Religion, and ren-  
ders his Performance of religious Duties  
unacceptable, as was observed before; but  
makes him unfit to conduct the common  
Affairs of the World. While he is under  
the Power of this Temper, he is no more  
capable of Business of any Consequence,  
than a Man in a Phrensy, or under a Fit of  
Drunkenness, is capable of it: The Light

SERM. which should direct him is extinguished, or  
XI. clouded, and he has thrown himself into  
the Hands of a rash and blind Guide, which,  
in all probability, will lead him astray, to  
the great Confusion and Loss of his Affairs.  
And as to the Ease and Satisfaction of his  
Mind; it must be evident to all, who have  
had ever so little Experience of the Work-  
ings of Anger, Revenge, and Peevishness,  
that nothing can be more ruinous to that,  
than the Indulgence of these Dispositions.  
Whenever they prevail, they necessarily de-  
stroy all our soft and pleasing Sensations,  
keep the Mind galling and fretting, and  
never suffer us to enjoy any Quiet, or Rest.  
The Gratification of our ill-natured Passions  
will indeed afford us some Pleasure, as it  
will relieve us, for a Time, from the Rack,  
or Torture, which we were enduring. But  
while the ill Turn of Mind continues in us,  
the Remembrance even of past Affronts  
and Offences, or any new Provocation that  
we meet with, will revive our Torment,  
and it shall be in the Power of every Mor-  
tal, who knows our Temper, and does  
not dread our Resentment, to make us per-  
petually miserable. But now the Man,  
who has confirmed himself in a Habit of  
Meekness, Patience, and Gentleness, is free  
from



from all this Distraction and Wretchedness, SERM.  
and partakes of the most serene Joy and XI.  
Satisfaction. As he is always calm, and in  
Possession of his Reason, he is at liberty to  
manage his Affairs to the best Advantage  
for himself: And, whatever Success he may  
have in outward Things, he is sure of the  
purest Pleasure from the Exercise of his  
Good-will and Humanity, which cannot  
be taken from him by the greatest Malice  
of his Adversaries; for by despising and  
neglecting the Injuries which they do him,  
or resenting them only in a Way becoming  
him as a Man, and a Christian, he turns  
the Edge of them, and prevents the Uneasiness,  
which otherwise he would feel from them.  
And whenever he reflects upon his  
own affectionate and generous Temper,  
which prompts him to forbear, and wish  
well, even to those who have deserved ill  
of him, and to study, so far as it is in his  
Power, the Peace and Happiness of all  
Men, it must be a very agreeable Object  
of Contemplation to him. The Consciousness  
of so much solid Worth and Goodness,  
must make him to delight in his own  
Nature, and give him the highest Self-  
Approbation. So that for our own Sakes,  
we should carefully acquire a meek and  
quiet

SERM. quiet Spirit, which is always one of the  
 XI. surest and greatest Sources of our Welfare  
 and Tranquillity.

III. The Third Thing proposed, was to consider the Methods of forming and raising a *Spirit of Meekness and Quietness* in us. And,

I. For attaining to that Part of it, which consists in a patient Submission to the purely natural Evils which befall us in the World, the great Rule is, to impress our Minds with a clear and deep Conviction of the Wisdom, Equity, and Goodness of Providence, by the Direction, or Permission of which, all such Evils come upon us. If we are fully persuaded that the World is under a perfectly wise, just, and good Administration, and that all the Events which happen to Mankind, fall out in the best Manner, for the Advantage of the Species in general, and so far as is consistent with that, for the Good of every one in particular; we must, if we have any good Principles and Dispositions in us, easily reconcile ourselves to disastrous Occurrences, and be calm and patient under our greatest Distresses. The lively Sense which some of the wiser *Heathens* had of the wise,  
 and

and just, and kind Intentions of Providence S E R M.  
with respect to Mankind, gave them al- XI.  
ways the firmest Confidence in God, and  
made them illustrious Examples of a manly  
Patience and Fortitude under the severest  
Trials. How unworthily, then, shall we  
act, if we have not the same Trust in Pro-  
vidence, and the same Resignation to it in  
Adversity, when we have not only all the  
Evidences which they had of the Preva-  
lency of Wisdom and Goodness in the Con-  
stitution and Government of the Universe,  
but also a most extraordinary Discovery of  
the Love of God to Mankind, exhibited in  
the Gospel, with positive Declarations and  
Promises, that the most grievous Evils of  
this Life shall finally conspire to the greater  
Good and Happiness of all truly pious and  
virtuous Men. Surely, we must be very  
inexcusable, if we do not, by inculcating  
these Considerations on our Minds, acquire  
a Temper, which will free us from all  
Murmuring and Anxiety about our Con-  
cerns in this World, and make us meekly  
and quietly to acquiesce in the Will of God,  
however afflicting the Circumstances into  
which he puts us, may sometimes be.

2. As the most difficult Part of Meekness  
and Quietness of Spirit, consists in the due  
Government



SERM. Government of our Resentment, with respect

XI.

to the Authors of moral Wrongs, or Injuries; we must, for the Attainment of this, take care to represent such Persons in the most favourable Light, that we justly can to ourselves. Our Resentment against them will be greater or less, according to the Opinion which we entertain of the Principles and Motives of their Conduct. If we apprehend them to act from pure Malice, or a fixed Desire of our Unhappiness, or from such Scorn and Contempt of us as we have no way deserved, we shall hardly avoid having a keen Passion of Anger raised in us against them, and be in Danger of running into great Extravagancies, in venting our Wrath and Revenge upon them. It is certainly owing to such an odious Conception of our Enemies, that our Resentment against them becomes so excessive as it frequently does. But if we can allow ourselves to think that Malice, or Contempt, may not be the Springs of those Actions which raise our Resentment against them at all; but that they may proceed from Ignorance, or Inadvertence in them; or, that they may be the Effect only of some transient Fit of Peevishness, or Passion; or, perhaps, of their Resentment against

against some Part of our Conduct, which SERM.  
has been injurious to them; or, if none XI.  
of these Causes can be assigned for the  
Injustice which they do us, yet, if  
we can suppose that it is only Self-love  
become too violent, which has led  
them into it, we shall be far more cool and  
moderate in the Expressions of our Indig-  
nation and Resentment against them: For,  
surely, Ignorance, Forgetfulness, and Mis-  
takes, and even some Fits of Frowardness  
and ill Humour, must appear Things very  
excusable in such imperfect fallible Crea-  
tures as we are, the best of whom are not  
altogether free from such Weaknesses; if  
we have given the first Provocation to our  
Adversaries, this may make us very patient  
in bearing the Abuses which we meet with  
in Return for it; or, if their immoderate  
Selfishness is the Cause of their Injustice,  
though this, indeed, must make them ap-  
pear very mean in our Eyes, yet, in Reality,  
it should not excite our Hatred and Rage  
against them, so much as our Pity and Com-  
passion for them. Now there is certainly  
Reason for making these Suppositions fre-  
quently in Favour of our Enemies: We  
are all too apt in our angry and discontented  
Moods, and from the Partialities of Self-  
love,

SERM. love, to magnify the Injustice of our Ad-

XI.  versaries out of Measure, and beyond all Reason; to speak of it as flowing from the worst Principles of Malice and Scorn, and as a Thing which has not, in the least, been deserved on our Part; when all, who judge calmly and without Prejudice, can easily see, that the Injuries which we so much complain of, have arisen only from some Inattention, or Misunderstanding; or, perhaps, from some disrespectful and injurious Treatment on our Side; or, at worst, from the selfish Affections of our Enemies, indulged above their due Proportion. It is certain, that there is but very little of what we call pure Malice in the Hearts of any Men; the worst do not seem capable of harbouring this, at least for any long Time. And if we ourselves come to judge as favourably of our Enemies, as those who are perfectly unprejudiced do, which by Attention and Care we may do, it would be a very effectual Means for abating our Resentment, and making us more mild, gentle, and quiet, in our Behaviour towards them than we commonly are.

3. When we feel our angry Passions beginning to move in us, let us carefully watch them, and guard against their rising

to



to any criminal, or unbecoming Height in SERM.  
us. The old Rule of withstanding and XI.  
suppressing a Disorder in the Beginning, or  
first Appearance of it, is in no Case more  
necessary to be observed, than in this of  
inordinate Wrath and Passion. For a small  
Spark of this Fire, if not extinguished, will  
soon burn up into a great Flame, and gather  
Strength enough to subvert all the Order of  
the Soul, and to push a Man on to the most  
distracted, mischievous, and fatal Conduct.  
It will, therefore, be extremely necessary,  
when we find ourselves growing into any  
extraordinary Warmth of Temper, to pause  
a little, and reflect whether that Degree of  
Heat and Passion which we perceive in our-  
selves can be justified? Whether it is only  
a moderate and becoming Resentment of  
some ill Usage which we have received;  
or, whether it be not, in a great Measure,  
the Effect of a boisterous and turbulent, or  
of a cruel and revengeful Disposition? And if  
it has the least Appearance of proceeding  
from such a Disposition, let us instantly re-  
strain and check it, before it becomes more un-  
ruly and headstrong. And it will be more es-  
pecially proper for those, who either, are  
naturally cholerick, or by bad Use and  
Custom are very obnoxious to violent Fits

SERM. of Anger and Frowardness, to observe di-

XI.

ligerly all the Emotions of their Spirits, and to be very cautious in giving way to the Transports, or Impulses of their Passions: Such should ever have a most vigilant Eye upon the weak Side of their Nature, that they may not be easily overcome; or surpris'd, upon every slight Offence, into any Instances of an unjust, or indecent Outrage, or Impatience. And let no one pretend, that it is not in his Power to allay the Heat of his Temper, and to keep his Passions, at least for ordinary, within the Bounds of Innocence and good Manners: The most angry and impatient of us all, must be sensible, how soon we can command and compose ourselves, in our most passionate Fits, upon the sudden Appearance of a Superior, or any Person whom we highly esteem and honour in this World; which is a certain Proof that the Government of our Passions is not a Thing impracticable. It is not, indeed, to be denied, but that those who have suffered Habits of Anger and Peevishness to grow in them, will find a great Difficulty in curing their Temper perfectly, and even in reforming it to a remarkable Degree. But if they will affect their Minds with a deep  
Sense

Sense of the Necessity of endeavouring a SERM.  
Reformation, and take up a firm and sted- XI.

fast Resolution of Amendment; if they will look with a jealous Eye to all violent Sensations and Motions within them; if they will consider themselves as acting in the Presence of God, and having Reason to depend upon his Assistance in the good Work which they are about; and if, when their Passions have, in any Instances, broke out irregularly, they will, as soon as is possible, put a Stop to them, rebuke themselves for their Weakness and Folly in giving way to them, and repeat and reinforce their Purpose of Amendment; if they will steadily persevere for some Time in these Methods of disciplining their Minds, it is not to be doubted, but that they will soon perceive a happy Change in their Dispositions, that the Fierceness and Violence of their Passions will be daily abating, and that they will be gradually forming themselves into a Temper of Meekness, Gentleness, and Peace.

4. Lastly, Let us observe the Direction which our blessed Saviour has given us, to express a meek, forgiving, and peaceable Spirit, when we exercise our Devotion, and offer up our Prayers to Almighty God.

A a

This



SERM. This is certainly one of the best Methods

XI. that can be of forming and improving a

Temper of Meekness and Quietness in us:

For if we have any Reverence of the Deity,

we cannot surely, but be very sincere, when

we pray, that *his Will may be done, and sub-*

*mitted to, in Earth, as it is in Heaven;*

when we beg his Forgiveness of those who

have done us Wrong, and declare before

him that we have forgiven them, and that

we hope for his Mercy and Favour to our-

selves, only on the Condition of our being

disposed to shew Mercy, and to do Good

to them. To deal hypocritically in this

Matter with the great God of Heaven and

Earth, is such a Height of Wickedness, as

it is to be hoped none of us are capable of

arriving to. In order, therefore, to raise a

meek and quiet Spirit in ourselves, let us

not only ask the Assistance of God to in-

crease it in us, but let us actually exercise

and express it in the Devotions which we

present to him. The Habits of Meekness

and Patience grow out of the repeated Acts

and Exercises of these Virtues; and the fre-

quent Exercise of them, under a lively

Sense of the Presence of God with us, and

in solemn Addresses to him, must have a

peculiar

peculiar Efficacy for promoting and con-  
firming the Temper and Habit of them in  
us. S E R M.  
XI.

I shall conclude with a short Reflection  
or two upon this Subject.

1. From what has been said, we may  
see the Vanity of that Philosophy, which  
would persuade us that our Passions are in  
their own Nature Evil, and that the only  
Thing which a wise Man has to do with  
regard to them, is to extirpate, or suppress  
them entirely. This, if it can be ever se-  
riously maintained by any Persons, is plainly  
an over-curious and false Refinement, by  
which, whoever pretends to shew superior  
Wisdom and Strength of Mind, will in the  
End discover only great Absurdity and Folly.  
However the Extravagancies and Excesses  
of our Passions are almost always vicious,  
and of an hurtful Tendency, yet the Pas-  
sions themselves, as originally implanted in  
our Nature, and exercised according to the  
Dictates of Reason and Religion, are of  
very great Use and Necessity. Even our  
Anger, the most dangerous and destructive  
of all our Passions, when not duly regulated,  
could not be wanted without great Incon-  
veniencies. Our Business, therefore, both  
as reasonable Beings, and as Christians, is

SERM. not to root out, or extinguish our Passions,  
 XI. but to govern and direct them well: When  
 we do so, we act the Part assigned to us here becomingly and worthily; and prepare ourselves for being advanced hereafter into higher Scenes, where we shall be able to discharge the Duties of rational and moral Agents, in an infinitely more perfect Manner, than in the present infirm Condition of our Nature we can do.

2. From what has been said, we may see that the Notions which so commonly prevail in the World, concerning the Honour, Courage, and Magnanimity of Men, are extremely ill founded. According to the general Opinion of the World, the Man of a meek, calm, and peaceable Temper, is only a low-spirited, timorous, and despicable Mortal; whereas the Persons, who from Revenge, Ambition, or Turbulency of Spirit, are ready to embroil the World, and to oppress, enslave, and plague their Neighbours, are allowed to be Men of noble Minds, high Courage, and chief Honour and Renown. But these Notions can arise only from Prejudice: In the Judgment, both of God, and of all Men of Reflection, the Man who steadily governs his Temper, and keeps all his Passions under a due



due Discipline, is possessed of a much more SERM.  
noble Firmness of Mind, and makes a far XI.  
more glorious Appearance, than the Persons  
of a fierce and rash Courage; who, notwithstanding the Boldness and Intrepidity with which they often encounter Dangers, are plainly defective in the most essential Part of a manly Character, the Power of Self-Government, and are carried by impotent Passions to Actions, which throw Reproach and Dishonour upon their Nature. In this Case, therefore, of fixing our Notion of true Greatness of Mind there is Reason to appeal from the Sentence of the ignorant World, as well as there is to differ from the common Practice of Mankind in the Ways of expressing it.

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## SERMON XII.

The Rule of *doing as we would be done to*, explained and recommended.

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MATTHEW VII. 12.

*Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them: For this is the Law and the Prophets.*

SERM.  
XII.

Matt. v.  
17.

THE holy Author of our Religion declared, that he *came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them*: And the Whole of his Preaching and Doctrine was a Confirmation of the Truth of that Assertion. He was so far from dissolving the Obligations which were laid upon Men before his Appearance, to observe the Precepts of the natural and moral Law, that on the contrary, he has confirmed and reinforced those Obligations, and

and added much more Strength and Weight S E R M.  
to them than they had before, And be- XII.  
cause he found Religion exceedingly cor-  
rupted, and the Laws of God in a great  
Measure subverted, through the false No-  
tions, and vain Traditions of the *Jews*; he  
took care to restore Religion to its original  
Purity, to assert and vindicate the Perfec-  
tion of the Divine Laws, to clear the due  
Extent of them, and to inculcate an Obe-  
dience to them according to their full Mean-  
ing and Comprehension. This was the  
great Business of his most excellent Dis-  
course upon the Mount, where, in Opposi-  
tion to the false Comments of the *Jewish*  
Doctors upon the divine Commandments,  
he gives his own Interpretations of these  
Commandments, which carry human Duty  
to a much higher Pitch than the *Jews* had  
generally any Notion of, and contain some  
of the most sublime and important Instruc-  
tions in Morality, that are any where to be  
met with.

Among many excellent Directions and  
Precepts contained in this Discourse of our  
Saviour, we have one in the Text, which,  
from the high Character which our Lord  
has given of it, from its great and extensive  
Use in Life, and from the clear Foundation



SERM. which it has in Equity and Reason, is in a  
 XII. very particular Manner entitled to our Con-  
 sideration and Regard. *Therefore, says he, all Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even to them: For this is the Law and the Prophets.*

The Word *therefore* with which this Precept is introduced, seems to intimate some Connexion between it, and the preceding Part of our Saviour's Discourse: But as after all the Attempts of Commentators, it is somewhat difficult to make this Connexion clear and natural, I shall not, as it is not material, spend any Time in endeavouring to fix it; but immediately proceed to the Consideration of the important Maxim, which our Lord has here delivered. In discoursing upon which, I shall observe the following Method.

I. I shall inquire into the true Meaning, Use, and Extent of this Precept.

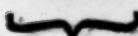
II. I shall consider the Character which our Saviour bestows upon it, when he says that it is *the Law and the Prophets.*

III. I shall shew the great Equity of it, and the Obligations we are under to observe and obey it.

*Lastly,*

*Lastly*, I shall conclude, with some useful Reflections upon the Whole. SERM.  
XII.

I. I shall inquire into the true Meaning, Use, and Extent of this Precept, For understanding the Meaning of this Precept, we must consider that our Saviour intending in this Discourse, to inculcate a more perfect Rule of Life than was delivered by the *Jewish* Teachers, and laying down this Precept expressly as a Summary of the Laws of Morality, contained in the Writings of *Moses* and the *Prophets* in reference to our Neighbour, he can never be supposed to have here required any Thing that is inconsistent with the most perfect Virtue, and the strictest Performance of the several Duties of Righteousness and Charity ; and therefore notwithstanding the general Terms which he uses, *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so them* ; we must not imagine that he has hereby commanded us, to gratify any unjust and unreasonable Desires and Expectations of our Neighbours, because it is possible that if we were in their Circumstances, it might please us to have such Desires and Expectations of our own gratified. A Magistrate, for Instance, is

SERM. not obliged, or authorized by this Precept,  
XII.  contrary to what publick Justice and the  
Safety of the Community require from him,  
to acquit a Criminal upon his earnest and  
importunate Applications to him, though  
he may think that if he himself was in the  
unhappy Condition of the Criminal, he  
might be as earnest and importunate to  
escape unpunished. Nor is it a rich Man's  
Duty by this Rule, to give away from him-  
self and his Family his Estate to a poor  
Neighbour, or to lay it out for the Support  
of idle or extravagant Men, because he  
may know that if he himself was Poor,  
or Idle, or Profuse, it would be very agree-  
able to him to have such a Support given  
to him : All Interpretations of this Precept,  
which lead to a Behaviour not reconcilea-  
ble with the Principles of Justice, and the  
good Order and Peace of Society, must  
certainly be false ; because they are con-  
trary to the Foundation, and to the whole  
Design and View of it. The Things there-  
fore desired and expected by us from our  
Neighbours, which we are to make the  
Rule and Measure of our Behaviour towards  
them, must be limited to the Things which  
we rightfully desire and expect from them.  
Our Saviour prescribes this Precept upon a  
very



very just Supposition, that a Sense of E-  
quity and fair Dealing between Man and SERM.  
XII.  
Man is natural to our Minds, and that by  
a careful Exercise of our rational and moral Powers we can settle our several Rights, and discern the Claims and Demands which we have upon one another, in our various Circumstances and Relations: And the Things which we see ourselves, in any particular Cases, to be fairly entitled to from others; the Things which our Conscience and Reason, after impartial Consideration, tell us, we may in any certain Circumstances desire and demand from them; these Things, and not the Things which irregular Passions, or private Interests, would prompt us to seek, our Lord requires us, if our Neighbours be in the same, or in like Cases and Circumstances, to do to them. This is the true Sense of this Direction.

And if any one should now inquire, what is the Use of this Precept, since it only requires us to act according to our natural Sense of Equity in our Dealings with others, and to fulfil the several Obligations which we know ourselves to be under to them; and whether a plain Direction to observe always the Dictates of Equity and a good  
Con-

SERM. Conscience, in our Behaviour towards our  
XII. Neighbours, would not have been a wiser  
and better Rule, as it would have saved us  
the Trouble of substituting ourselves in the  
Place and Circumstances of others, before  
we consider what the Principles of natural  
Right and Equity oblige us to do to them,  
and fix on the Methods of conducting our-  
selves towards them? If any one, I say,  
should make this Inquiry, it may be answer-  
ed, that this Precept has a great Advantage  
above any such plain Direction, for enga-  
ging us to a just and good Conduct towards  
our Neighbours: For though Notions of  
Right and Justice are born with us, though  
whenever we judge impartially we must see  
and acknowledge the equitable and fair  
Part towards Mankind, though in almost  
all common and indifferent Cases we very  
easily and truly perceive the well-founded  
Claims which Men have upon one another;  
yet as we are made with selfish Passions as  
well as with a Sense of Equity and Huma-  
nity, and as these Passions are usually very  
prevalent in us, and apt to pervert and blind  
our Judgment in Cases where our own In-  
terest is concerned; as they have frequently  
an imperceivable ill Influence even on ho-  
nest Minds, and bias them too much to  
that

that Side on which their own Advantage SERM.  
lies; as they hardly fail, when they pro- XII.  
duce no iniquitous Judgment or Disposition  
in us, to make us at least very attentive to  
our own Interest, and quick and sensible in  
discerning all our Claims and Rights; it  
must be of great Consequence for securing  
our Performance of the Duties which we  
owe to our Neighbours, to prevent the bad  
Effects which the Prejudice and Partiality  
occasioned by Self-love might have on our  
Determinations towards them, to put us  
into a Capacity of judging impartially be-  
tween ourselves and them, and to make us,  
as far as is possible, to feel for them as we  
do for ourselves. Now these are the Things  
intended by this Precept: For as it makes  
us in Imagination to exchange Conditions  
with our Neighbours, and to suppose our-  
selves the Persons who are to be affected  
with the Treatment which we give to  
them, we must, after this, have lost all ra-  
tional Regards not only for others but for  
ourselves, as well as have corrupted our na-  
tural Notions of Equity, if we do not dis-  
cern and admit all the fair Claims of our  
Neighbours, and honestly fix the Bounds  
of that Duty which we owe them. This  
Precept puts our Minds into a Situa-  
tion



SERM. tion the most advantageous that can be for  
 XII. our deciding uprightly between ourselves  
 and other Men, and lays a Foundation, not  
 only for our keeping clear of all Injustice  
 towards our Neighbour, but for our having  
 almost the same lively Sense of his Rights  
 and Dues, which we have of our own  
 Rights, and the Obligations which he is  
 under to us. An honest and steady Appli-  
 cation of this Rule, would be an effectual  
 Preservative of our Integrity, in all our  
 Dealing and Intercourse with Mankind.

This will more clearly appear from the  
 Consideration of the great Extent of this  
 Rule, which is the last Point to be spoken  
 to, in order to a full Explanation of it. Now  
 there are not any Cases either of Justice, or  
 of Charity, or arising from the various Re-  
 lations in which Men stand to one another,  
 which are not comprehended in this Pre-  
 cept; or, in which it does not take place,  
 and oblige us to our Duty.

1. This Precept extends to all Cases of  
 Justice and Equity. Justice, or the ren-  
 dering to all Men the Things to which  
 they have a perfect and clear Right, whe-  
 ther that Right arises from the Bounty of  
 Nature, or is the Consequence of their own  
 innocent Labour, a fair Contract, the Ap-  
 pointment

pointment of equal Laws, or the free Do- SERM.  
nation of others; this, I say, is so deeply XII.  
imprinted on the Mind as a Thing invari-  
ably due to all Men, and is so necessary to  
the very Being of human Society, that  
whoever acts contrary to it in any remarka-  
ble Instances, will certainly be condemned  
by every one who has any Remains of Con-  
science in him, and any Regard to the  
common Interests of Mankind: Those par-  
ticularly who have their Rights and Pro-  
perties violated and invaded, will have an  
acute Sense of the Injuries which they suf-  
fer, and be apt to look upon the Authors  
of those Injuries, if they are very grievous  
and oppressive, as profligate Wretches, who  
have forfeited all Title to Protection from  
Men, and rendered themselves unworthy  
to continue Members of Society. These  
are the Sentiments which all of us feel,  
when we suffer through the Injustice of  
Men. As therefore we are very sensible of  
our own Title to just and equal Dealing  
from our Neighbours, as we think all Un-  
righteousness in regard to ourselves to be  
inconsistent with the moral Obligations  
which are naturally laid upon Mankind, and  
the greater Acts of it to be quite intolerable;  
we are bound by the Rule now under Con-  
deration

SERM. sideration to make the Case of our Neigh-  
 XII. bours our own, to give to them the same  
 equitable Treatment which we claim to  
 ourselves, and to abstain from all that Iniquity in reference to them, which, if done to ourselves, we should so much complain of.

2. This Precept likewise comprehends the Cases of Humanity and Charity. Tho' the Right of Men to the Offices of Humanity is not so perfect and determinate, as their Right to the Acts of Justice is; yet their Claim to them, not only in Cases of apparent Distress; but in all Cases where the Performer is put but to little or no Labour and Expence, is so very strong and obvious from the Necessity of these Offices to the Well-being and Comfort of human Life; from the natural Affections of Men uniting them in one Body, and leading them to Acts of Mercy and Kindness to one another; and from the Dictates of every Man's Conscience, teaching him that a steady Exercise of Humanity and Benevolence, is the most noble and perfect Course of Life that can be: The Claim of Men, I say, to the Offices of Compassion and Charity, is upon these Accounts so strong, that whenever they are disappointed in



in receiving them, they will certainly com- SERM.  
plain of those who disappoint them as Per- XII.

sons who have no Bowels in them, who have lost the true Spirit and Temper of Men, who at least have nothing that is generous or great in their Nature, and act very inconsistently with their Duty, as social Creatures, and moral Agents. As these, therefore, are the common Sentiments of Mankind, with respect to their Title to Acts of Humanity and Charity, it is plain that they are obliged by this Precept to the Exercise of mutual Compassion and Love; that all are to be sincerely well-affected towards the Interest of their Neighbours, and not only to sympathize with them in their Afflictions, and to support and relieve them under pressing Wants and Necessities, but to rejoice in their Welfare of all sorts, and to contribute readily to the Advancement of it; that every one should be disposed to communicate to others any innocent Joys and Satisfactions of which they are susceptible, and study to make all about him easy and happy.

3. And as this Precept thus comprehends the Cases of Justice and Equity, and of Mercy and Charity, so also all the Cases arising from the various Relations of Man-

B b

kind,

SERM. kind, and obliges them to the Duties incumbent on them in their respective Stations. For as upon very little Consideration they must see that some of these Relations have been wisely formed by Nature, and others of them have been introduced by Men, for securing and encreasing the Happiness of Society ; so for making these Relations answer their End, certain Duties are necessary to be performed by those who are related to one another, which are very well known, and are always justly claimed and expected by Men, in their several Relations, as their Due. Thus whether they be Parents or Children, Governors or Subjects, Masters or Servants, or in whatever other Relation they stand to one another, they all know what Persons in each Relation expect and are entitled to from their Correlatives ; that Parents expect to be revered and honoured by their Children, and that Children have a Right to be carefully and tenderly educated, and provided for, by their Parents ; that Governors and Masters look for Submission, Obedience, and Fidelity from their Subjects and Servants ; and that Subjects and Servants may fairly claim Protection, and just, equal, and kind Usage from their Governors and Masters :

ters: They are therefore bound by this SERM.  
Rule to render to all to whom they are re- XII.  
lated, that which they know may be rea-  
sonably expected by them, and which they  
themselves, if they had exchanged Situa-  
tions with them, would think they might  
lay claim to. So that this Precept extends  
to all Cases in which Men are concerned  
with one another, and obliges all to the se-  
veral Duties which they owe to their Neigh-  
bours.

II. I proceed to consider the Character  
which our Saviour bestows upon this Pre-  
cept, when he says that it is *the Law and  
the Prophets*. Now this Character may  
comprehend these two Things, which are  
both very plain with respect to this Rule:  
1. That it pursues and promotes the great  
Design of the *Law and the Prophets*. 2.  
That it is the Sum or Abridgment of them,  
so far as they relate to the Duties which  
we owe to our Neighbours.

1. This Precept pursues and promotes  
the great Design of the *Law and the Pro-  
phets*. By the Law and the Prophets we  
are plainly to understand that System of Re-  
ligion, which is to be found in the Wri-  
tings of *Moses*, and the other sacred Books



SERM. of the Old Testament: And it is certain  
XII. that though that Religion was burthened  
with a Multitude of external Rites, and  
pompous ceremonious Services, yet these  
were always Things of the least Value in  
it, and enjoined, not for their own Sake,  
but for preserving the *Jews* from the Ido-  
latry and other Corruptions of the *Heathens*,  
and keeping them stedfast in the Worship  
of the one true God, and the Performance  
of the other important Duties required from  
them. The Prophets therefore every where  
make a Distinction between the ceremonial  
and moral Parts of Religion, and always  
give the Preference to the latter; declaring  
Justice and Integrity, Mercy and Charity  
in our Conversation with Mankind, and a  
humble and reverent Behaviour towards  
God, to be the Qualifications which God  
principally regarded in his Servants, and  
absolutely necessary to entitle Men to the  
divine Favour, and that without them, no  
external Performances whatsoever would  
be at all accepted. And according to these  
Declarations which we meet with in the  
Old Testament itself concerning the Na-  
ture and Design of true Religion, our Sa-  
viour, who was the best Interpreter of the  
divine Laws, has told us, that the weigh-  
tier

tier Matters of the Law, or of the Jewish Religion, were the Virtues of Justice, Faithfulness, Mercy, and the Love of God. SERM. XII.

And that to love God with all the Heart, and Soul, and Mind, was the first and great Commandment; and to love Mankind, was the second like unto it; and that on these two Commandments hanged all the Law and the Prophets: These two Rules contained the Substance of all that was truly good in the Religion of the Jews, and for explaining and enforcing these, all the Revelations which God had made to that People, were chiefly and ultimately intended. As this Precept therefore requires so strictly, and lays so good a Foundation for our practising all social Duties, it is evident that it is a great Reinforcement of the Law, and has the same Things in View, which were designed by Moses and the Prophets. Matt. xxiii. 23.  
Luke xi. 42.  
Matt. xxii. 37—40.

2. This Precept is the Sum or Abridgment of the Law and the Prophets, so far as they relate to the Duties which we owe to our Neighbours. Whatever Commandments were delivered by Moses, and whatever Directions we meet with in the Books of the ancient Prophets, with respect to the Duties which Men owe to one another, are all reducible to, and virtually compre-

SERM. hended in this Precept. *The whole Law,*  
 XII. as St. Paul speaks, *is fulfilled in this Say-*

*ing, all Things whatsoever ye would that*

Rom. xiii.  
 9.

*Men should do to you, do ye even so to them;* as well as in that other Saying, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, as thyself.* Indeed considering the Inadvertence and Inattention of Mankind, and the Prejudices and Corruptions which usually prevail among them, it is very necessary that every Branch of their Duty be particularly explained to them, and earnestly inculcated upon them: But yet it is certain, that whoever truly understands and practises this one general Rule in the full Extent of it, will not stand in need of any particular Instructions as to his Conduct towards his Neighbours, or be wanting to any of those Obligations which he lies under to them. But this being abundantly evident from what has been discoursed under the former Head, I shall not here insist any farther upon it.

III. I go on now to shew the great Equity of this Precept, and the Obligations which we are under to observe and obey it.

As to the Equity of it: This is a Thing so very apparent, that few Words will be sufficient



sufficient to illustrate it: For Mankind being all Creatures of the same Species, partaking of a common Nature, and born to the same Privileges and Advantages; it is plain, that where no Diversity of Circumstances, makes a Difference in the Duties which they owe to one another, they must be reciprocally the Objects of the same Affections and Regards. Superior Merit will always entitle its Possessors to a peculiar Degree of Respect and Honour; and either natural or political Relations, will oblige those who are joined in these Relations, to a different Conduct towards each other; and a great Variety of particular Cases in which Men may be, may require as great a Variety in our Ways of acting towards them: But after due Allowances have been made for these Differences of Circumstances and Relations, the natural Equality of Men is a clear Foundation for every Man's treating his Neighbour in the same Manner in which he can justly desire to be treated by him. So that this Rule of *doing as we would be done to*, is the most impartial and fair that can be. And indeed in the Equity of it, every Man's Conscience naturally acquiesces. This is a Maxim which all Men who have professed

SERM. to have any Notions of Morality, or of  
XII. a *Right* or a *Wrong* in Life, have ever  
agreed in: It has been universally assented  
to by People of all Ages, Nations, and Re-  
ligions. Even Persons of the meanest Ca-  
pacities can discern the Equity of it, and  
therefore complain of injurious, or unkind  
Treatment, when in regard to themselves  
it is broken through.

Thus the great Equity of this Rule ap-  
pears; which alone might be sufficient to  
convince us that we are strictly bound to  
obey it: For all Mankind are plainly sub-  
ject to the Law of natural Right and Equity,  
from the very Constitution of their Beings,  
antecedently to the Consideration of its be-  
ing the positive Will of a Lawgiver, and to  
an Expectation of Benefit and Reward from  
the Observance of it; and no one, who has  
not extremely corrupted himself, can ever  
transgress this Law, without giving a Wound  
to his own Heart, and being conscious of  
great Baseness and Depravity. But yet be-  
cause the evil Desires and Passions of Men,  
are frequently so strong, as to incline them  
to do Things contrary to the clearest Right,  
it may be necessary to insist also upon some  
other Arguments, which farther shew us,  
why we should obey this Rule.

1. And *first*, Let us consider that it is SERM.  
the Commandment of our blessed Saviour, XII.  
and a principal Part of his Religion. He  
here enjoins it most strictly on all his Dis-  
ciples, declaring it to be not only among  
the weightier Precepts of the Law of God,  
but the Sum and Substance of one whole  
Table of it. It is an essential Branch of  
true Religion, without the Practice of which,  
all our Pretences to the Name of Christians,  
will be utterly vain. The great Design of  
our Lord in that Religion which he insti-  
tuted, was to revive and restore the Law  
of Nature, and to heighten and improve  
all moral Obligations to the utmost. He  
therefore every where exacts from his Fol-  
lowers, the Practice of all the great moral  
Virtues, and particularly those Virtues of  
Righteousness, Mercy, Charity, and the  
like, which are comprehended in this ge-  
neral Rule: All these are most indispensa-  
bly required of Christians, and some of  
them are made the distinguishing Badges,  
and the Characteristicks of our holy Profes-  
sion. And therefore as ever we would ap-  
prove ourselves the true Disciples of *Jesus*  
*Christ*, and answer the End of that Reli-  
gion which he has published to the World,

it



SERM. it concerns us with all Care and Diligence  
 XII. to observe this Precept.

2. Let us farther consider of what great Use the Observation of this Rule would be, in regard both of publick Societies, and particular Persons.

(1.) In regard of publick Societies: Nothing could be more beneficial to these, than a punctual Observation of this excellent Precept. If it was as duly practised, as it is strictly enjoined, it would soon introduce into the World, the most glorious and happy State that can be imagined. It would at once put an End to all injurious and fraudulent Dealings, to all oppressive and rigorous Practices, to all the ruinous Designs of Ambition, the Insolence of Pride, and the mean Arts of Covetousness; it would kill all the Seeds of Envy, *Bitterness and Wrath, Anger and Malice*, in the Hearts of Men: It would, on the contrary, raise among Mankind a Spirit of universal Justice and Benevolence; it would open and enlarge their Souls towards one another, making them not only fair and upright, but humane, friendly, and generous, gentle and condescending in their whole Behaviour: It would engage all to the Duties which they owed to others in their several States

States and Relations, and in a Word, would SERM.  
make every one as truly concerned to pro- XII.  
mote the Interest of his Neighbour, as he is

to promote his own. And what a happy  
Thing would human Society then be, when  
all the Members of it dealt thus equitably  
and kindly with one another! How truly  
*good and pleasant* would it be to behold  
Men living together in such a State! In this  
Event we should find a full Accomplishment  
of the ancient Prophecies concerning the  
Prosperity and Peace which are to prevail  
in the Reign of the *Messiah*, when we are  
told, *the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb,* Isaiah xi.  
*the young Lion and the Fatling shall lie* 6, 9.  
*down together, and a little Child shall lead*  
*them; and there shall be nothing to hurt or*  
*to destroy in all God's holy Mountain;* when  
all the Iniquity, Fierceness, and Inhuma-  
nity of Men's Tempers shall be entirely  
subdued, when Truth, Peace, and Love  
shall dwell in every Breast, and an univer-  
sal Tranquillity spread itself over the Face  
of the Earth. Of such great Consequence  
would the Practice of this Rule be, for  
promoting and establishing the Happiness  
of Society. As ever therefore we would  
contribute to the general Good of Mankind,  
which is our great and most indispensable  
Duty,

SERM. Duty, and which all generous Minds will  
XII. readily take every Opportunity of doing; we  
should endeavour by our own Example to  
recommend this Precept to the universal  
Observation and Practice of the World.

(2.) In regard of particular Persons, the  
Observance of this Rule would be likewise  
very beneficial. The Advantages which it  
would afford to these are many: I shall  
take Notice only of one or two of the most  
considerable. And first, it would procure  
them the Esteem and Confidence of Man-  
kind. This will be very well known to all  
Men of Experience and Practice in the  
World, who must be sensible how much a  
Man of an approved and established Cha-  
racter for Integrity and Humanity, who  
is so far from injuring others, that he al-  
ways deals kindly and courteously with  
them, as he would wish to be dealt with  
himself, is honoured, valued, and readily  
trusted by all who know him; while, on  
the other hand, a Man of the opposite  
Character is despised, detested, and aban-  
doned by all the World. Secondly, it  
would contribute greatly to their inward  
Serenity and Peace. A Violation of this  
Rule, in any gross Instances, if it be not  
accompanied with a Hardness of Heart, or  
an



an Insensibility to all the Notions of Virtue SERM.  
and Honour, which is itself extreme Wretch- XII.

edness, must be always followed with an Uneasiness and Disturbance of Mind. For Acts of Iniquity are so contrary to the Constitution of our Nature, that it is impossible that they should ever be committed by a Man, who retains any of the common Sentiments and Principles of Humanity, without his condemning himself, and his feeling an inward Anguish and Remorse. On the contrary, a strict Regard to this Precept would not only free us from this Self-Condensation, and all the Pain which arises upon it, but would likewise be a sure and perpetual Source of Joy and Comfort to us: That upright, equitable, and charitable Temper which this Rule designs to form and increase in us, will give us a pure and constant Pleasure of Self-Approbation, and be a good Evidence both of our loving God, and our being loved by him. The Consciousness of it will add much to our Happiness in all Conditions and Circumstances; it will heighten our Relish of the Blessings of Prosperity, it will revive and enliven us in Adversity, it will be our great Support in the Article of Death, and make us with a humble Confidence to conclude,  
that

SERM. that whenever we leave this World, we shall

**XII.** find ourselves in a more perfect and a better State. *The Work of Righteousness shall be Peace*, says the Prophet, *and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness, and Assurance for ever: Mark the Perfect, and behold the Upright*, says the Psalmist, *for the End of that Man is Peace.*

Isaiah

xxxii. 17.

Psalms

xxxvii. 37.

I shall now conclude with some Reflections on what has been discoursed.

1. We may see the great Wisdom and Goodness of God appearing in this Precept, which is so accommodated to the Constitution of human Nature, and so conducive to the true Interest and Good of Mankind. The Whole of Religion is indeed a *reasonable Service*, perfectly agreeable to the calmest and most natural Sentiments of our Minds, and admirably contrived for conferring on us the greatest and most lasting Benefits: But some Laws of Religion more particularly and visibly carry the Marks of the Divine Wisdom and Mercy of their great Author; among which this must be accounted one, which is so extremely just and equitable, that every Man, who has any Remains of Conscience in him, must immediately approve it; and which, if duly observed, would be a most plentiful

plentiful Spring both of publick and private SERM.  
Happinefs. This Precept, therefore, being XII.  
so large and comprehensive a Branch of  
the Christian Institution, is a strong Proof  
of the Eafinefs and Gentlenefs of our Sa-  
viour's Yoke, and of the Excellency of his  
Religion, not only above the Superftitions  
which prevail in *those dark Places of the* Pfalms  
*Earth, which, in the Language of the Psal-* lxxiv.  
*mift, are full of the Habitations of Cruelty;* 20.  
but even above that Scheme of Religion  
which God thought fit to give to the *Jews*,  
which, notwithstanding the good Design of  
it, and the many excellent Rules which it  
contained, abounded with *Statutes which* Ezek. xx.  
*were not good, and Judgments by which Men* 25.  
*could not live,* that is, Laws, which had no  
intrinfick Goodnefs to recommend them,  
and which, inftead of promoting the Eafe  
and Pleafure of the Observers of them, were  
rather oppreffive and burthenfome. This is  
not the Cafe as to the Religion of the Gos-  
pel: Even the pofitive Precepts of it are all  
prudently enjoined, and of an apparent good  
Tendency and Ufe; and the great moral  
Laws of it are fo plainly adapted to our Na-  
ture, and fo immediately fubfervient to our  
Welfare, that they muft effectually con-  
vince us of the wife and kind Intention of  
him



SERM. him who imposed these Laws upon Man-  
XII. kind; particularly this Precept, which con-  
tains half of the practical Part of Christianity, is so very reasonable in itself, and so happily calculated for the Benefit of the World, that it must satisfy us, that God is far from being a severe or hard Master; that he has not dealt with us in the way of mere Power or Arbitrariness, but that he has shewn himself by his Laws, to be both our gracious Parent and just Governor; who designs nothing more by the Obedience which he requires from us, than our own Happiness.

2. We may hence learn, what false and unworthy Representations of Christianity those Persons give us, who in their Accounts of it, omit or set but little Value on the moral Duties and social Virtues, which Men are to practise towards one another. This is certainly to give us a very different Notion of Religion, from that which has been delivered by *Jesus Christ*, and his Apostles; who have most plainly and constantly in all their Discourses, declared the uniform Practice of Morality, including the Duties of a rational Piety towards God, as well as Acts of Righteousness and Humanity towards Men, to be the Substance and

End

End of Religion, to which all other Things SERM.  
in the Christian Institution, are only pre- XII.  
paratory and subservient. But notwith-  
standing this is a Point so clear in the New  
Testament, *that he who runs may read it*;  
and notwithstanding that the Doctrine of  
our Saviour and the Apostles upon this Sub-  
ject, is most apparently reasonable in itself,  
there have been many, some of whom have  
been so vainly conceited of their own Dis-  
cernment in Religion, as to despise or  
pity the Ignorance of all who have not  
thought like themselves, who have depre-  
ciated Morality, who have looked upon  
the Virtues of Justice, Charity, Meekness,  
and the like, as Qualities which perhaps  
might have been commendable in *Heathens*,  
but which are but little deserving of the  
Attention and Zeal of Christians, and who  
have placed the Essence of their Religion,  
in inward Raptures, Communications, and  
Impressions; or in a Course of great Mor-  
tification and Abstraction from the World,  
and an assiduous Attendance on the outward  
Performances of Devotion; or in great  
Zeal against Error, and for maintaining  
what they call the Purity of Faith; or per-  
haps in a strong Confidence in the Merits  
of *Christ*, to save them from the Guilt and

SERM. Punishment of their Sins, though they are  
XII. at no Pains to be delivered from their Power  
and Dominion. These Notions of Christianity may possibly, in some, take their Rise merely from a strong Enthusiasm, perverting their Judgment, and shutting out all Means of better Information; while in others, they proceed in a great measure from a corrupt Disposition of Heart, which makes them glad to embrace any Schemes of Religion, which will secure them a Liberty of indulging their vicious Inclinations in this World, consistently with their entertaining the Hopes of Happiness in the next. But in whatever way we are to account for such Opinions, it is plain that they are utterly false, and most dishonourable and injurious to the Gospel, which indeed makes no Account of any thing in comparison of moral Duties, and is famous above all other Institutions for urging and establishing them upon the most noble and solid Principles; and which has not left the least Room to any Man to imagine himself to be in a State of Favour with God, and entitled to future Happiness upon any Foundation, but the Practice of universal Righteousness.

3. Lastly,



3. Lastly, Since this Precept bears so SERM.  
great a Character, and is of such a high XII.  
Rank and Importance in Christianity, and  
is withal so very equitable in itself; how  
guilty and inexcusable must those Men be,  
who are notoriously defective in the Ob-  
servation of it, and shew by their Actions  
that they have but little or no Regard to it  
at all? And how many are there in the  
World, and even among the professed Dis-  
ciples of our Saviour, who thus despise and  
neglect this great and important Law; who  
are so far from treating their Neighbours in  
the fair and humane Way prescribed by it,  
that they give them Cause to complain of  
Injustice or Unkindness, in, perhaps, most  
of the Instances of their Conduct towards  
them; who instead of cultivating an im-  
partial lively Sense of the several Rights and  
Claims of their Brethren, are full of base  
narrow Views, and always ready to im-  
prove whatever Advantages the Ignorance  
or Weakness of others may give them for  
their own Profit, and to lay hold on any  
little Circumstances which they may find  
in Law for evading the most equitable Ob-  
ligations? But how can any ever pretend  
to be the Followers of our blessed Saviour,  
who transgress so grossly this essential Pre-

SERM. cept of his Religion; whose Practices are

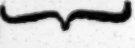
XII. so far from being worthy of *Christians*, that they would have been a Reproach to any *Heathens*, and will certainly be detested by all who have any Generosity or Honesty of Mind in them. Such Persons may value themselves, if they think fit, upon their Faith, their Knowledge, their Zeal, their Devotion, and other Attainments in Religion; but while their Conduct is so contradictory to this excellent Rule, all their Faith, all their Religion is certainly vain. It is well known, how highly one of the *Heathen* Emperors revered this Precept, and how careful he was to engage all about him to the Practice of it; and without all Doubt, the Behaviour of many, who have had no better Guide than the Light of their own Minds, will be the Condemnation of Multitudes of degenerate Christians, who in the common Duties of Morality, have fallen far short of those, whom perhaps they have despised, as poor blind *Heathens*, notwithstanding that the Gospel has given us the greatest Advantages for performing these Duties, and makes the highest Account of them, and exacts the Practice of them with the utmost Severity.

# SERMON XIII.

The Love of our Country, explained, illustrated, and inforced.

PSALM CXXII. 6, 7, 8, 9:

*Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy Walls, and Prosperity within thy Palaces. For my Brethren and Companions Sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.*

**I**N these Words the Psalmist recom- SERM.  
mends the Cultivation of one of the XIII.  
most noble and becoming Affections,   
that have any Place in the human Heart;  
a Love of our Country, or of that Com-  
munity or Society of which we are Mem-  
bers; and excites us to it, by Considerations  
of the greatest Weight and Importance.  
The Method in which he directs us to cul-  
tivate



SERM. tivate this Affection, is by praying to God  
XIII. for the Peace and Prosperity of our Coun-  
try; by begging of the Governor of the  
Universe, who sits at the Helm, guiding  
and conducting all the Affairs of the World,  
that he would, in Ways consistent with  
the Purposes of his own most wise and  
righteous Administration, effect and esta-  
blish the Quiet and Welfare of our national  
Community: Which Act of Praying to  
God for the Happiness of our Country, as  
it presupposes a sincere Love of our Coun-  
try prevailing in our Hearts, since it would  
be both the greatest Profaneness, and most  
impudent Hypocrisy, to pretend to express  
in our Addresses to the great Searcher of  
Hearts, and judge of our whole Conduct,  
any Sentiments and Affections which we  
do not perceive and feel within us; so it is  
a most excellent Means of improving and  
increasing this Affection. The Habits of  
all Virtues arise out of the repeated Acts  
and Exercises of the Virtues themselves;  
and the Exercise of virtuous Affections, in  
solemn Acts of Devotion, and under an  
immediate lively Sense of the Presence and  
Inspection of the Deity, must have a  
mighty Efficacy, above all other Ways of  
expressing and exerting such Affections,  
for

for raising and strengthening them in our SERM.  
Minds, if we have any just and becoming XIII.  
Apprehensions of the Excellence and Dig-  
nity of the Divine Nature. The offering  
our Prayers, therefore, for the Prosperity of  
the Publick, with Understanding and Se-  
riousness, is plainly an admirable Expedient  
for forming and heightening a Temper of  
Good-will and Love towards it in us. Be-  
sides that this Practice, if we attend to it  
with Judgment, must draw forth our Love  
of our Country into all those Actions, by  
which we can contribute to its Interest and  
Welfare; as it is one necessary Condition  
of our praying acceptably and successfully,  
that we do whatever is in our own Power  
for obtaining the Blessings which we ask  
from God.

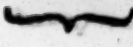
The Motives by which the Psalmist ex-  
cites us thus to cultivate an Affection to the  
Publick, are of great Force, and very much  
deserve our Attention. The first is con-  
tained in these Words; *they shall prosper  
that love thee.* By a sincere and zealous  
Attachment to the Interest of the Commu-  
nity, we shall consult our own Advantage  
and Welfare. A Love of our Country,  
though it is one of the most generous and  
disinterested of all Affections, yet when it

SERM. is steady, strong, and active in a Man, it  
 XIII. never fails to be likewise the Source of his  
 private Good and Happiness. For besides  
 that the Exercise of this Affection, and Re-  
 flections upon it, always afford him the  
 most noble and divine Pleasures, it is such  
 a reputable and engaging Quality, that it  
 must necessarily procure him great and uni-  
 versal Respect and Love: It may very pos-  
 sibly be the Means of advancing him to  
 some Station of Dignity and Honour in the  
 Society of which he deserves so well, and  
 must at least raise him up many Admirers  
 and Friends, who will be zealously con-  
 cerned for his Interest, who will stand by  
 him in his greatest Dangers and Difficul-  
 ties, and be even ready to expose them-  
 selves, if it were necessary, for his Defence  
 and Safety. St. *Paul* has observed, that  
 Rom. v. *for a good Man, for one who has been*  
 7. *eminently useful and serviceable, to the*  
*World, one would even dare to die;* and  
 the Observation is very justly founded, and  
 sufficiently confirmed by the Experience of  
 Men: There is, certainly, Generosity and  
 Gratitude enough in many Men, to make  
 them cheerfully sacrifice all their worldly  
 Interests, and even Life itself, for the Pre-  
 servation of a Patriot, if that could be the  
 Means



Means of delivering him. The second Ar-  
 gument suggested by the Psalmist, for the  
 Cultivation of a publick Spirit, is expressed  
 in these Words; *For my Brethren and  
 Companions Sakes, I will now say, Peace  
 be within thee.* In the Safety and Security  
 of the Publick, the whole temporal Feli-  
 city of our dearest Friends, Associates, and  
 Dependants is involved. Where there is  
 no Publick, no Government established  
 upon just and equal Principles, but the Af-  
 fairs of a great Multitude of Men, either  
 lie in Confusion, or, are subject to mere  
 lawless Power, all the Possessions and Ad-  
 vantages of Life are rendered quite preca-  
 rious, must be frequently ravished and tak-  
 en away from a Man, and can at best yield  
 him, if he has any Notion and Taste of  
 Liberty, but a flat and insipid Pleasure.  
 Whoever, therefore, has the social, gene-  
 rous, and benevolent Affections strong with-  
 in him; whoever feels the Force of the  
 Ties of Kindred and Friendship, *Relations  
 dear, and all the Charities of Father, Son,  
 and Brother,* must be naturally alarmed and  
 and shocked at the Apprehensions of such  
 a State of Society, as would constantly  
 threaten both himself, and all to whom he  
 is united by the tenderest Bonds, with the  
 Ruin

SERM. Ruin of all their Happiness as to this World,  
XIII. and be most anxiously concerned for the

 Support of a Constitution, which is necessary to protect and preserve his own Liberties and Properties, and likewise those of the Persons, whose Interests are altogether of as much Value and Importance to him as his own. The last Motive by which a Love of the Publick is recommended by the Psalmist, is thus expressed; *Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.* Where there is a wise and good Constitution of the political Body, care will be always taken to protect Men in the Exercise of Religion, to secure them a full Liberty of worshipping God according to the Dictates of their Consciences, and of disciplining and improving their Minds in the Practice of all Virtue; and to furnish those, who want it, and are willing to make use of it, with Direction, or Assistance for doing these Things to the best Advantage. And as these are the greatest Benefits which Men can enjoy, being the Means not only of their highest Felicity in this World, but of their everlasting Life in a future State, they must, if they judge and act rationally, be most zealously attached to the Constitution,

tion, which effectually secures and affords S E R M.  
to them such an inestimable Happiness. XIII.

Having thus opened up the View and Intention of the Psalmist in this Passage, I shall now proceed to make two or three Observations, which will naturally arise from it, and explain, illustrate, and improve them a little, in their Order.

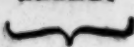
1. We may observe, that *the Love of a Community, or Country, is an Affection, which may be naturally expected to prevail in every good Mind.* The Psalmist here supposes every honest Heart to be full of this Affection, and ready to pour it out in the solemn Addresses, which it sends up to Heaven. And indeed, if we consider the Nature of this Affection, and the strong Inducements which Men have to cultivate it, we may easily apprehend, that no Person, who has any Pretence to a worthy Character, can ever be destitute of it. A Love of our Nation or Country, is one of the most excellent and honourable Dispositions of which our Hearts are capable. Every benevolent Affection whatsoever, has a Loveliness and Worth, which in some Degree recommends it to our Consciences, and gains our Approbation and Esteem:

But



SERM. But the more calm, strong, and extensive

XIII. any benevolent Affections are, the greater  
their Excellence and Worth appears to be,  
and the more do they command our Ap-  
probation and Love. This is a Fact, of  
the Truth of which, every one may be  
convinced, by his Reflections on himself,  
and his Observations on the Tempers of  
other Men. The calm and steady Love of  
Mankind in general therefore, the earnest  
Desire of the Happiness of all rational Crea-  
tures, who can partake of it, is certainly  
the most noble and worthy Principle, on  
which we can act towards the Creation of  
God, and raises us up, in the highest De-  
gree in which we are capable of such a  
Thing, to a Participation of the Dignity  
and Glory of the Creator himself. Next  
to this, in Point of Excellence and Merit,  
is the Love of some particular large Soci-  
ety or Community of Men, especially if it  
be well formed and calculated, not only for  
promoting its own common Interests, but  
for contributing to the Happiness of a con-  
siderable Part of the World around it : The  
Love of our Country, in this View of it,  
is plainly a Passion worthy of the most ge-  
nerous and heroick Souls, and is withal a  
Thing which we are so directly led into,  
by

by our social Instincts and Propensions; by S E R M.  
the Attractions of Friendship and natural XIII.  
Affection, by our Desires of Liberty, and   
those other Advantages which exalt and  
adorn our Nature, and which are to be  
enjoyed only in a well constituted civil  
State, that it seems to be quite impossible  
that a Mind, which is capable of being  
struck with the Appearances of moral Beau-  
ty, and has any good Dispositions moving  
within it, should not feel, at least in some  
Measure, the Force and Influence of this  
Affection. It is certain that the natural  
Sentiments and Feelings of Mankind, have  
always determined them to make a great  
Account of this Virtue; and therefore we  
find that there are no Actions, which have  
been more highly celebrated in History, or  
are still contemplated with more Admira-  
tion and Applause, than those which have  
proceeded from publick Spirit, and Zeal  
for one's Country. And it is likewise cer-  
tain that this Affection is perfectly agreea-  
ble to the Spirit of true Religion, which is  
a Thing so evident, that it would hardly  
have been necessary to have remarked it,  
had it not been pretended, that Religion,  
as it appears in its most perfect Form in  
the Gospel, lays no Stress upon the Love  
of

SERM. of our Country, and gives no Countenance

XIII. and Encouragement to Men in the Practice

of this Duty : Which is, surely, as groundless an Objection as was ever insinuated against the Religion of our Saviour ; since the great, or whole Design of it, is to inspire and inculcate a Temper of universal Good-will and Love ; which in the first Place, must unite us closely to the most important and widely extended Community of all rational Agents, of which God himself is the Father and Governor ; which must likewise prompt us to promote the common Interest of Mankind, so far as it falls under our Influence, without a regard to the Distinctions of Nation and Country, Faith and Religion ; and which must afterwards make us to consult the Happiness of particular Societies of Men, and of Individuals, according to the Relations in which we stand to them, and the various Degrees of Amiability which are to be found in them, in which the Duty which we owe to our Country is undoubtedly included : So that if any Man falls short in the Regards which are due from him to the political Society of which he is a Member, he offends as much against the Law of Christianity, as against the Dictates of

Conscience,



Conscience, and the Law of his own Nature. SERM.  
XIII.

The Use which we are to make of this Observation, is first to convince us of the Absurdity and Wickedness of those Attempts which have been made, to explode all publick Spirit, to turn the very Notion of it into a Jest, to persuade us that Mankind are at bottom governed by nothing but some low and meanly selfish Principles, and that their most plausible Pretences to the Love of their Country, and their Kind, are but Delusion, or Affectation. This is a Scheme so contrary to the common Perceptions and Feelings of our Minds, and the most obvious Appearances in human Nature, and has such a dreadful Aspect upon the Affairs of Society, that we may justly conclude that the Persons who are fond of it and propagate it, at best labour under most wretched Prejudices, and the strangest Confusion of Thought; if they do not rather speak (which in most Instances is probably the Case) from a Consciousness of the Want of the generous Principles of Patriotism and publick Virtue in Themselves, which, therefore, in their own Defence, they endeavour to vilify and ridicule in all others.

But

SERM.

XIII.

But the principal Improvement which we are to make of the Observation, is to cultivate and exert, with great Care, this generous Affection of Love to our Country, which is so necessary an ingredient in every worthy Character. In our Professions and common Discourses, many of us seem indeed to have Ambition enough to be esteemed Patriots, or Persons sincerely concerned for the Safety, Interest, and Honour of our Country; and to be truly entitled to this Character, would certainly be a most noble and honourable Distinction. But it is not so easily attained to, as we are, perhaps, apt to think it is: Patriotism, in the highest and most conspicuous Degrees, is plainly out of the Reach of most Men; since to this there is necessary, not only a most upright and disinterested Disposition of Heart, but a large and sagacious Mind, able to form great and comprehensive Schemes for the publick Welfare, and to point out and pursue the Measures proper for rendering them effectual. But even the lower Degrees of the Patriot-Character are not to be attained to by mere Words and Wishes, or even by some Exertions and Fits of Zeal for the Interest and Reputation of our Country, upon Occasion of national In-

juries

juries and Affronts. If we would really SERM.  
merit the Character of Friends and Lovers XIII.

of our Country, we must have an habitual Intention, and fixed Disposition to promote the Good of it, by all the Means in our Power; be so far from being influenced by any sordid, or private Considerations to betray or hurt it, that we must be ever ready to sacrifice Life, Fortune, and every thing that is most valuable to us in this World, for its Defence and Security, and faithfully employ any Talents and Advantages which we have, for adding somewhat to the Stock of common Happiness. It is certain, that in this Case, a great deal more may be expected from some than others, in Proportion to their superior Abilities for abounding in Acts of Generosity and publick Beneficence: The Persons of the first Character for Wisdom, Authority, Rank, and Influence in a Nation, must always, if they would shine as Patriots, and acquit themselves like Men of Virtue and true Goodness, watch and labour most eminently for the common Good, and look upon their Pre-eminence in Society, not as an Exemption from those Cares, which are above all others, worthy of Men, but as an Obligation to attend to them with greater Zeal



SERM. and Affiduity. These more especially,  
XIII. should charge themselves with looking after  
the most important Concerns of the Community; the Preservation, or Improvement of the Constitution; the Security of Liberty and Religion; the Establishment and Support of equal Laws; the Encouragement of Arts and Sciences, Trade, and Manufactures; and the giving full Scope to the Powers of the human Mind, to unfold and exert themselves, in all those Ways, which tend either to the Safety, Strength, and Profit of Society, or to the Convenience, Elegance, and Ornament of Life. But all other Men, whatever their Situation and Rank may be, must likewise, if they would be thought to have any Generosity of Heart, and any Principles of Virtue in them, contribute their Part to the common Interest of their Country, in those Methods, in which their Talents enable them severally, to serve it most effectually; some, by undertaking a liberal Profession, or any Office of Consequence to the Publick, and performing the Duties belonging to them with Diligence and Integrity; others by applying themselves to Agriculture, or any useful Branch of Commerce or Business; all, by setting an Example of Industry,  
Tem-

Temperance, Justice, Fortitude of Mind, SERM.  
 Piety, and all Virtue, which, as it is in XIII.  
 the Power of Persons in the meanest Con-  
 dition, so it is a Thing of such absolute  
 Necessity to the true and lasting Prosperity  
 of any Nation, that without it, the highest  
 Pretences which any can make, to publick  
 Spirit, must, at best, be very aukward and  
 preposterous.

2. I proceed now to another Observa-  
 tion, which arises from the Passage before  
 us, which is, that *in the Idea of a Country*  
*which is the Object of our Affection, a wisely*  
*concerted Scheme of Policy, or a justly framed*  
*civil Constitution is included.* The Psalmist,  
 as is sufficiently evident from this Psalm  
 itself, saw that there was such a Scheme or  
 Constitution in the *Commonwealth of Israel*,  
 which united the Society in one Body, and  
 secured the Rights, Liberties, and Posses-  
 sions of the several Members of it, and pro-  
 vided for the just and prudent Administra-  
 tion of all Affairs of Consequence to them;  
 and this was plainly the Foundation of the  
 Zeal and Affection which he here expresses  
 for his Country. And it is certain, that  
 something of this Sort is essential to the  
 Notion of a Country, and the only Ground  
 of our entertaining a rational and manly

SERM. Affection towards it. The being born in a  
XIII. certain District of the Earth, the breathing  
in the Air of a particular Climate, and the  
living among a Multitude of Men, held  
together, perhaps under one Head, not  
however by any Union or Confederacy  
founded in Principles of Reason, and aim-  
ing at their common Interest and Benefit,  
but by mere Force, or the Terror of an  
Oppressor and Tyrant, can never give a  
Man of Reflection, the Idea of his standing  
in any Relation to a Country. The only  
rational Ends for which Men associate in  
great Numbers, or form themselves into  
large Bodies or Communities, besides the  
Gratification of their social Affections, are  
the protecting themselves from the Outrage  
and Violence, to which they are subject in  
a State of natural Freedom, and the securing  
more effectually than they otherwise could,  
the Enjoyment of their Lives, Properties,  
and Liberties; and in order to their being  
a People or Nation, and having what may  
be justly accounted and regarded by them,  
as a Commonwealth or Country, Provision  
must be made for this Improvement of  
their Condition, by some well devised Con-  
stitutions and Orders of the Society, or  
some wise settled Plan of Polity and Go-  
vernment.



vernment. There is indeed such a Stock SERM.  
of social Affection in the Hearts of Men, XIII.  
as often makes them to unite and cling to-  
gether, with all the Love which could  
proceed from the Relation of Countrymen  
and Fellow-Citizens, merely from some  
such Circumstances, as were mentioned be-  
fore, which can never constitute that Re-  
lation; and there is usually such a natural  
Anticipation in their Minds, of the Ne-  
cessity of publick Order and Government,  
that many of them pay great Respect and  
Submission to any Schemes, that have the  
Appearance of introducing, or preserving  
Order among them, however, little fitted  
they may be to promote the true Happiness  
of a social State. But this proceeds only  
from their following rashly the first Mo-  
tions and Impulses of Nature, without em-  
ploying their rational Faculties to prepare  
the Way for the just and becoming Exercise  
of their Affections. Whoever of them will  
be at Pains to consider and reflect, will  
soon find, that to produce a strong Affection  
and Attachment to any Society of Men,  
which can be deliberately approved, or jus-  
tified, there must be something social and  
moral in the Constitution of the Society,  
some Scheme or Plan of Power established

SERM. among them, which is visibly calculated  
XIII. for the general Interest of the whole Community, and so far as is consistent with that, for the Happiness of every individual Member of it; and that to make any Man with Reason to look upon himself as a Part or Member of this Society, and to interest himself as a Fellow-Citizen in the Affairs of it, he must have a Share in the common Benefits and Privileges resulting from the Constitution, and be able under the Protection of it, to pursue any innocent Happiness for himself, and to do all the Good which he may be capable of, to his Dependents, Friends, and Neighbours.

From what has been said upon this Head, we may first, see the wretched and pitiable Situation of the Men, who have nothing that can be properly called a civil State, or a Country, among them; and who yet are put upon Services more than would be necessary to render a real Country flourishing and happy, perhaps merely to satisfy the Will of an imperious Master, to raise the Glory of a *Grand Monarque*, or to swell the Pride of some vain Mortal, who most insolently assumes a Power which the Deity himself does not claim, of trampling upon the Rights of Humanity, and debasing the noble

noble Faculties with which Mankind are SERM.  
formed, to serve the Purposes of vile, mean, XIII.  
and despicable Passions. Now this is the  
Case, wherever arbitrary Power, in what-  
soever Form administered, prevails, and  
without the Controul of Law, or Reason,  
disposes as it pleases, of the Lives, Liberties,  
Fortunes, and all the Affairs of those who  
are subject to it. And however the Men  
who live in this State do not seem to be  
always much affected with the Vassalage  
and Ignominy in which they are held;  
nay, however some of them may boast of  
Things, as their Honour and Happiness,  
which are really the Badges, or Conse-  
quences of their Servitude and Misery; yet  
all who have a true Generosity of Spirit,  
and know the Prerogatives of human Na-  
ture, and what Privileges and Advantages  
Mankind are born to, must have a deep  
Sense of the miserable Lowness and Base-  
ness of such a Condition; and look with  
Concern upon the Persons who are invo-  
luntarily kept in it, and with Disdain upon  
the little-minded unmanly Creatures, who  
reconcile themselves to it, and for the Sake  
of being Slaves of some Note and Rank,  
are even glad to give up their native Free-  
dom, Dignity, and Glory.



SERM. From hence, by a joyful Transition, we  
XIII. are naturally led to reflect on the happy  
Condition of these Nations, so different from that of the Inhabitants of almost all other Parts of the World, with respect to a Constitution, or Country: We, if any People ever had a Constitution, founded in Nature, adapted to the true Ends of a social State, and actually yielding the Advantages of that State, certainly have one. And as we are in Possession of this greatest of all temporal Blessings, the Foundation and Security of all the other Blessings of this World; it is our Duty upon this Account,  
1. To be very thankful to the great Governor of the World, who in the Course of his Providence has so conducted Things, that our free Constitution remains and flourishes, when those of our Neighbours, for the most part, have been long ago destroyed; that Liberty, which was more or less shared for a Time, among the several Nations and Governments, which in these *Western* Parts of the World, arose from the Ruins of the *Roman* Empire, but is now banished out of most of them, has taken a peculiar and fixed Residence with us, and brought along with it its natural Benefits and Advantages, Security, Strength, Commerce,

merce, Riches, Plenty, Improvements in SERM.  
Knowledge, and all the useful and elegant XIII.

Arts of Life. 2. Upon the same Founda-  
tion it becomes us, to entertain a high Ve-  
neration for the Memories of those most  
brave and worthy Men, who were the In-  
struments of providing and conveying to  
us this great Happiness. The full Esta-  
blishment of a free and independent Con-  
stitution, is sometimes the Work of im-  
mense Labour and Toil, which from small  
Beginnings, by constant struggling against  
the Efforts of Tyranny and Faction, and  
at a vast Expence of Treasure and Blood,  
is at length brought to Perfection. It is  
certain that this was the Price paid for the  
Constitution which we enjoy: We must,  
therefore, be quite lost to all the Sentiments  
of Ingenuity and Gratitude, if we do not  
reflect with a just Respect and Admiration  
on the Conduct of those noble Spirits,  
who exerted themselves so gloriously, in  
behalf of their own Rights and Privileges,  
and those of their Fellow-Citizens, and of  
Posterity, and generously determined, ra-  
ther than give them up, to fall Sacrifices,  
as Multitudes of them did, in the Cause  
of Liberty and their Country. We must  
likewise be very destitute of all generous  
Principles,

SERM. Principles, if we do not greatly reve-

XIII. rence the Memories of those magnanimous

Princes, who instead of making use of the Power which they possessed, to invade our Liberties, and destroy the Constitution, employed it all to vindicate and assert our Freedom, and strengthen and confirm our Plan of Government; and as this was remarkably the Conduct of the heroic Prince, who by bringing about our last great *Revolution*, delivered, restored, and improved the free Constitution of these Nations, his Name must be ever precious, while a Spirit of Liberty, and a Sense of Justice and Honour remain among us. 3. *Lastly*, From a Sense of the Happiness at present resulting to us from our Constitution, we must be naturally inspired with Zeal to continue and perpetuate it. But as this is a Point, which I shall have Occasion to touch upon hereafter, I only mention it now, without staying to enlarge upon it.

3. The last general Observation which I shall make from the Words of the Psalmist, is, that *the more perfect the Constitution of any Country, or Society is, the greater should be the Zeal of all interested in it, for its Support and Preservation.* The affectionate and earnest Concern which the Psalmist

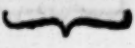


*explained, illustrated, and inforced.*

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must expressed for his Country, was founded SERM.  
not merely on his perceiving that there was XIII.  
a Constitution among the *Hebrews*, which  
in some Degree carried on the Ends of So-  
ciety, and promoted the Happiness of it;  
but on his seeing that they had a most ex-  
cellent System or Plan of Polity, which  
was most admirably calculated for serving  
the Purposes of a social Union, and would  
have effectually secured to the People, pro-  
vided they consulted their own Interests,  
and co-operated with the Constitution, all  
the main Branches of temporal Happiness,  
together with the Profession of the true  
Religion. A Constitution of this Sort, could  
not fail to engage the highest Esteem and  
Affection of every Mind that reflected, and  
was governed by rational and good Prin-  
ciples: And every other Constitution, as it  
approaches towards the same Perfection,  
must of necessity be proportionably valued  
and regarded by Mankind. This is a Point  
so clear, that Words seem to be no more  
wanted to illustrate it, than to shew why  
Men should be fond of Life, Health, Light,  
Wisdom, or any of those Things which  
are most apparently useful, and most plainly  
speak their own Praise and Commenda-  
tion.

SERM. Instead, therefore, of dwelling on the  
XIII. Illustration of the Observation, let us rather  
consider what Improvement we are to make  
of it; for it is certain, that it will bear a  
very close Application to ourselves, who by  
the Favour of Heaven, and the Courage  
and Virtue of our Ancestors, have got a  
Constitution, which will vie with most  
that we have heard of, whether in ancient,  
or modern Times. It is not my Intention  
to enter into a Dissertation upon the various  
Plans or Models of Civil Polity, and the  
respective Advantages and Disadvantages of  
each; nor to give any particular Account  
of the Principles of our own Government,  
and the Frame of our Constitution. The  
latter may be supposed to be in general  
pretty well known to every Man of com-  
mon Sagacity and Observation among us.  
It will be sufficient to observe, that our  
Constitution is a Mixture of the three ori-  
ginal simple Forms, into which the Go-  
vernment of a People may be thrown;  
from a just and well-proportioned Compo-  
sition of which, in the Judgment of all the  
greatest Masters of political Wisdom, the  
best Frame of a civil State is to be erected.  
The Evils of the several simple Forms of  
Government are so great and palpable, that  
Men

Men soon perceived and felt them: They, SERM.  
therefore, in several Parts of the World, XIII.  
had Recourse to a complicated Scheme, in   
which they endeavoured to blend and unite  
the simple Forms, so as to retain the Be-  
nefits of them, and to guard as much as  
was possible against their Inconveniencies.  
This was the Intention of those who had  
the Formation and Modelling of our Con-  
stitution, perhaps from the first Foundation  
of it, but most certainly and apparently du-  
ring the latter Periods of it, in which, by  
means of some happy Revolutions, it re-  
ceived such considerable Emendations, as  
have brought it nearer, than at least the  
greatest Part of the Constitutions that we  
have had any Account of, to the due Tem-  
perament and Poise of an equal Govern-  
ment; as the several constituent Powers of  
it, are so adapted to one another, and so  
mutually ballanced, that they can All with  
great Facility concur in promoting the  
common Good, while no one of them can  
pursue a separate Interest, or make At-  
tempts upon the Freedom and Indepen-  
dence of the other two, but with great  
Difficulty, and not without a manifest Ha-  
zard of injuring and ruining itself in the  
Issue. The Beauty of this Constitution must  
appear



SERM. appear in a very clear Light to those, who  
XIII. are able, and will be at the Pains, to trace  
it back to its first Principles, and to take a  
View of the natural Tendencies and Operations of these: But the Perfection of it, will be most universally understood, by attending to what we see to be its actual Consequences and Effects. For to what but the excellent Spirit of the Constitution of these Nations, especially since the last great Settlement and Improvement of it, is it owing, that besides our enjoying at Home, the Blessings of Peace and Plenty, a just and impartial Execution of our Laws, and together with a national Establishment, or publick Direction in Matters of Religion, a Toleration of all other Forms of Religion consistent with the publick Safety, we have for upwards of half a Century made so great a Figure abroad, in supporting the common Interest and Cause of *Europe*? That we have so gloriously, and upon the whole, successfully exerted ourselves, in resisting the Progress of Tyranny, and defeating the Design of an *universal Monarchy*, and are still able to throw such Difficulties and Obstacles in the Way of it, as it is to be hoped, under the Protection of Heaven, will be sufficient to render it in the End as  
vain

vain and ineffectual, as it is in itself wicked S E R M.  
and execrable? We have indeed great Ad- XIII.  
vantages from our Situation, and from the  
Numbers, Industry, and Genius of our Peo-  
ple; but these Things would be but of  
little Avail to us, (as is plain enough from  
the poor Account which they almost always  
turn to, when any of them are to be found  
in Countries of arbitrary Rule) were it not  
for the free and equal Spirit of our Govern-  
ment, which by giving Opportunity and  
Encouragement to make the proper Use of  
them, has thereby raised us to that Height  
of Power and Greatness which we possess:  
And if the Freedom and Vigour of our  
Constitution is but preserved, (which, un-  
der the Princes of the present Royal Fa-  
mily, if we judge from their known Cha-  
racters, and the Experience which we have  
hitherto had of them, we may assure our-  
selves, provided we perform our own Part,  
will be the Case) it must undoubtedly  
render us superior to all the arbitrary  
Powers around us, and not only enable us  
to maintain our own Tranquillity and In-  
dependency, but give us still more emi-  
nently the distinguishing Honour, which  
we at present have, of being the Patrons  
and Guardians of the Liberties of Mankind,  
and

SERM. and the Dread and Scourge of Tyrants and  
XIII. Oppressors.

The Inference from all this, is very obvious, and easily drawn; that since we are blessed with a Constitution of so much Excellence and Importance, we should be full of Ardour and Zeal for its Safety and Prosperity. We must indeed fall under such an Infatuation, as makes Men wantonly, or desperately, throw away Health and Life, if we are ever willing to give it up, or to exchange it for any System of absolute Government; and we must be void both of all Goodness and Greatness of Mind, quite degenerated from the Virtue and Bravery of Spirit, which animated our Progenitors, if we suffer it through any Indolence or Carelessness of ours, to be destroyed, or impaired; nay, if we are not always vigilant for its Stability and Security, and anxious to preserve it entire and pure, and to transmit it in a flourishing Condition to Posterity. But as great as our Corruptions are in several Respects, it is to be hoped, that there are still good Principles enough left in us, to engage and warm our Zeal in so generous and interesting a Cause, and that it would look like an unjust Suspicion, to press this Matter by any farther



farther Arguments. I shall, therefore, for SERM.  
a Conclusion of the Whole, only briefly XIII.  
consider (without intending however to med-  
dle with Things out of my Sphere) what the  
principal Dangers and Evils are, which in-  
deed seem to lie open enough to every Eye,  
that threaten our Constitution, and how  
far it may be in our Power to prevent, or  
remedy them.

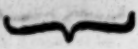
It is certainly very happy for us, that  
one of the greatest Dangers and Dif-  
ficulties, which those who went before us,  
in discharging the honourable Trust of  
watching for the Safety and Interest of their  
Country, had to guard against, is now re-  
moved; I mean the Intention which ap-  
peared so plainly and frequently in the  
*Crown*, to encroach upon the Indepen-  
dence of the Constitution, and to destroy  
the Liberties of the People. Thanks be to  
Heaven, that this Danger vanished at the  
Time of our last glorious *Revolution*, when  
the Power of the Prince was more expli-  
citly than ever before limited, and the  
Rights of the Subject were more fully de-  
clared and settled, and the Laws were with  
greater Certainty, made equally the Measure  
of the Government and Administration of  
the one, and of the Duty and Obedience

SERM. of the other; and that our Kings have ever  
XIII. since, not merely from Necessity, but from  
Principle and Inclination, which is particularly the Glory of the present Reign, ruled according to Law, and the Principles and Spirit of the Constitution. The remaining Dangers, therefore, which all the Lovers of their Country among us are to arm themselves against, seem to be chiefly, the one which arises from the evil Designs of that restlessly ambitious, and exorbitant Power abroad, which is the natural and irreconcilable Enemy of the Religion and Liberty of these Nations; and that, which proceeds from our own Disorders and Corruptions. It is not to be doubted, if that Power which has been so long aiming at the Dominion of *Europe*, should succeed in its Views upon the Continent, but that our Constitution would be in imminent Hazard; as the whole Attention and Force of our Enemies would then be turned upon our Destruction, which would certainly appear to them a necessary Measure, for both a fuller Accomplishment of their End, and a Security to their other Acquisitions and Possessions. But though some vigorous Efforts have of late been made by them, for compassing their long meditated Design; yet,

yet, if the Measure of our Iniquity be not SERM.  
filling up very fast, and we are not by the XIII.  
righteous Judgment of God, as a Punish-  
ment of our Ingratitude and Perverseness,  
to be deprived of what is at present our dis-  
tinguishing Happiness and Glory, there  
seems to be no Cause for any violent Un-  
easiness and Fear, from any Success which  
our Adversaries have hitherto had: If we  
are but true to our own Interest, and act  
as becomes Freemen, and good Christians,  
there is the greatest Reason to think, that  
we have still Strength enough, in Con-  
junction with our Allies, by the Blessing of  
Heaven, to baffle the most powerful At-  
tempts of our Enemies, and to make them  
end in their utter Disappointment, Disgrace,  
and Confusion. The other Danger to our  
Constitution, which proceeds from our in-  
ternal State, the Disorders and Corruptions  
which abound among us, is indeed much  
more formidable: It is sufficiently known,  
that Vice has been the Bane of the most  
flourishing States and Kingdoms, and, in  
many Instances, destroyed a People, whom  
no foreign Enemy could distress. It is  
likewise very evident, that this deadly Poi-  
son has diffused itself widely and deeply  
among us, insomuch, that there is hardly



SERM. any Order or Rank of Persons who have  
XIII. wholly escaped the Infection of it, and in  
some it appears with the most threatening  
and fatal Symptoms. Besides the ordinary  
Vices of Sensuality and Debauchery, Ani-  
mosity and Faction, which, in the present  
State of human Depravity, will, perhaps,  
always more or less prevail in all large So-  
cieties and populous States, and which have  
grown to a great and alarming Height  
among us, some Corruptions, which in  
former Ages were very much unknown in  
these Nations, have for a considerable Time  
past been creeping in, and gradually gain-  
ing Ground; such as an undisguised Pro-  
faneness, an open and avowed Contempt of  
the Duties of Divine Worship, a Denial  
not only of all revealed Religion, but of  
the Principles of natural Religion itself; a  
ridiculing of the Notions of Good and Evil,  
Right and Wrong, and the treating all mo-  
ral Obligations as mere Fictions and Illu-  
sions. It is to be hoped, indeed, that this  
wretched Corruption of good Principles, is  
not become so general, as to be in any Sort  
our distinguishing Character; but it has  
certainly spread far enough to excite the  
Zeal of all Lovers of their Country to put  
a Stop to it, considering that the inevitable  
Effect

Effect of its continuing to prevail must be SERM.  
a Diffolution of Morals, and consequently **XIII.**  
the Ruin of all social Order and Happiness. 

As these Things must necessarily follow from the Progress of that Corruption of Principles, which has been introduced among us, every one who understands our present Situation, and has the Interest of the Publick really at Heart, must undoubtedly lay himself out to check the growing Profaneness and Licentiousness of the Age, and to raise a serious Sense of Piety and Virtue in the Minds of all around him. And no Man must say that it is altogether out of his Power to contribute to these Ends: The Weakest and Lowest may promote them, at least by a good Example; and others of us, not only by that, but by the several Methods of Instruction, Persuasion, and Reproof, in Proportion to our Abilities and Opportunities, particularly among those, over whom, either a natural Relation, or our Character and Station in Life may have given us Authority and Influence. If then we profess to have a Love for our Country, let us in these Ways sincerely endeavour to put away all licentious Principles and Practices from among us, and to bring those we converse with under

1

the

SERM. the full Power of all moral and religious  
XIII. Obligations; being solicitous to engage them  
not only to the Duties of Justice and Humanity, which indeed the very Necessities of Men, and the most natural and busy Instincts in their Hearts will always in some Measure incline them to, but to the Exercise of a rational Devotion, to make them fix their Attention habitually upon the Deity, and to act under a stedfast lively Persuasion of their Accountableness to him as their righteous Governor and Judge; which Things, however exploded as absurd Superstitions, by many who would pass for the most acute and discerning Persons, are really of the greatest Excellence in themselves, and of admirable Use for keeping us steady and uniform in the Practice of Virtue, and indeed so necessary for this Purpose, that our Neglect of them must ever be attended with great Defects in many other Branches of our Duty. If such a Spirit of true Religion should spread and prevail, we might hope for greater and more durable Advantages to the Publick from it, than from any other Thing whatsoever; as it would stop up the great Source of our publick Disorders and Calamities, by curing the Degeneracy of our Minds, and as



it would engage all the Members of the S E R M.  
Community, from the Supreme Governor XIII.

to the meanest Subject, according to their  
several Capacities and Stations, to perform  
all those Duties which are immediately pro-  
ductive of the publick Welfare, as well as  
the Means of procuring us the Protection  
and Favour of Heaven. Let us, therefore,  
contribute whatever may be in our Power  
to the raising such an excellent Spirit, and  
by doing so, we shall approve ourselves no  
less true Friends and Lovers of our Country  
than good Christians, and be entitled to a  
Reward not only from God, but from  
Mankind: Whereas, on the contrary, if we  
are indifferent or negligent in this Matter,  
we shall shew ourselves to be void of the  
Principles both of Religion and publick  
Virtue; and our pretending this \* Day to  
*Sanctify a Fast*, for averting the Judgments  
of God from these Nations, and imploring  
his Protection and Blessing to them, must  
appear to be but a solemn Mockery of  
Heaven, and vile and odious Hypocrisy.

\* This Sermon was wrote upon Occasion of one of our  
late publick Fasts.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

Page 18, Line 16, *after* Humanity, *add*, or some Species  
or Appearance of them, Page 128, Line 4, *Dele* it.

30 JY 64

